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VOL. XVIII; No. 231; THURSDAY JANUARY 9, 1997; DAY 20, 1375; SHAABAN 29, 1417

Iraq Smashes Israeli Spy Ring

BAGHDAD — Iraq announced Wednesday that it had dismantled an espionage ring working for Israel and would broadcast the confessions of the "traitors."

The official Iraqi news agency said the confessions would be broadcast by state television starting at 9:00 p.m. (1700 GMT).

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Russia Links Accord With NATO to New Deal on CFE

MOSCOW — Russia will make the signing of an accord on its future relations with NATO contingent on changes to the conventional forces in Europe treaty, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said Wednesday, quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Primakov said the signing of an accord outlining Russia's new relationship with NATO would depend on "reaching an agreement on updating the CFE (Treaty), in order to resolve our concerns about a possible advancement of NATO's military infrastructure."

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Italy: Iran Plays Important Role in Maintaining Stability in Persian Gulf, Mideast Peace

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – The Italian Foreign Ministry, in a statement issued Tuesday on the occasion of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati's visit to Italy, underlined that Rome is determined to continue its critical dialogues with Tehran.

The statement, published following the meeting between Velayati and Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, said that the two ministers last met in New York on the sideline of the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Velayati arrived in Rome Tuesday. On Tuesday night, he was invited to a banquet which was attended by the Italian industrialists.

Velayati in a meeting Tuesday with president of Italian chamber of deputies, Luciano Violante, reviewed further promotion of Tehran-Rome ties.



ROME, Italy (Jan. 7): Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini (L) and his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati (2nd R) sit face to face at a conference table along with members of their delegations during their meeting in Rome. Velayati earlier this Tuesday arrived for an official visit to Italy.

(AFP PHOTO)

ministers stressed the significant role that can be played by Iran in preserving stability in the Persian Gulf region and the Mideast peace process.

Meanwhile, Dini hinted at the interest of the Italian companies in Iran's economy and considered the Islamic Republic of Iran as the major supplier of energy needed by Italy. He also expressed satisfaction with the cultural agreements signed between the two countries, in particular in higher education and palaeontology areas and renovation of historical buildings. The accords had been reached during the visit of the Italian minister of state for external affairs to Tehran last October.

The Iranian and Italian foreign

In the meeting, Violante called for exchange of parliamentary delegations between the two countries and termed it a major step towards expansion of mutual relations.

He also invited his Iranian counterpart Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri to pay a visit to Rome.

Velayati arrived here Tuesday on an official two-day visit at the invitation of his Italian counterpart Lamberto Dini.

Despite U.S. pressures on Europe to freeze ties with Iran, Italian officials on Tuesday held talks with a delegation from the Islamic Republic on increased political and economic cooperation.

Italy stressed the hope that a policy of "critical dialogue" would bring Iran closer to Europe and re-integrate it with the international community, the Foreign Ministry said.

The ministry said Iran had an important role in maintaining stability in the Persian Gulf and Mideast peace. Italy praised "more constructive positions" recently adopted by Iran regarding terrorism.

Meanwhile, Velayati met Wednesday with the Vatican's Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano, and discussed bilateral relations as well as religious freedom in the Islamist country, the Vatican said.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the two men also discussed the overall situation in the Middle East.

Velayati, who arrived in Rome Tuesday for a two-day official visit, met earlier for nearly an hour with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi.

European Union countries have resisted pressure from the United States to halt what the EU calls a "critical dialogue" with Tehran.

Leader: Mosque, Bastion of Religion, Wisdom and National Resistance

TEHRAN — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Wednesday underlined the decisive role played by mosques in leading great Islamic movements of the world to victory.

"Mosques have been the origin of great Islamic movements and works in the course of history," the Leader told thousands of visiting people including Ulama and theological students from the holy city of Qom.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that a mosque is the bastion of religion, wisdom, intellectualism and national resistance besides being the origin of great moves and immortal blessings.

"The revolution of Muslim nations began to suffer defeat and they had their independence lost when they cut off their relationship with mosques, religion and Islamic faith. Therefore, a mosque, as a bastion of religion, worship and wisdom can herald great movements and immortal blessings for Muslim communities," the Leader noted.

A mosque is a school and a university for meditation and a center for purification of soul and connection with the Almighty God, the Leader said.



Ayatollah Khamenei said the rule of the Holy Qoran, Islamic jurisprudence and religious tenets in Iran, is the result of an uprising by all strata of society and of the birth of a popular movement.

Many movements of the world, because of lacking in divine and spiritual leaders failed to have even their ordinary talents flourished, the Leader said, adding "but the feat of the Islamic system in Iran was that it managed to foil a well calculated and large scale plot of big powers of the world by relying on religion and people's faith."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said: "The economic sanction, military confrontation and widespread propaganda campaign, launched by the arrogant powers against the Iranian nation could not bring it to its knees.

"The feat of this system, revolution and great nation was

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Five More European Nations Invited as Al-Khalil Observers

Al-Khalil Talks in Crisis Over Israeli Delays

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS -- Israeli and Palestinian officials together invited five countries on Wednesday to join the observer force in the West Bank city of Al-Khalil with the expected withdrawal of Israeli forces from most of the area.



"We have signed today with our Israeli counterparts invitations to six countries to provide 180 personnel to the temporary international presence in Hebron (Al-Khalil) in anticipation of the redeployment in Hebron," said Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat after the ceremony.

Some 150 observers from Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey will join a 30-member Norwegian team already stationed in the troubled city. The officials also signed a formal invitation in Norway to extend its presence in the city.

The border force is to be deployed for renewable six-month periods once Israel and the Palestinians sign an agreement on withdrawing most Israeli troops from Al-Khalil as required by the Oslo peace accords.

Both sides hope the agreement will ensure calm among the 400 Jewish settlers and 120,000 Palestinians living in the city known for a history of fanaticism.

Officials said the observers will not be stationed at the cave of the patriarchs, a site sacred to both Muslims and Jews. Security arrangements at the cave of the patriarchs, called Ibrahimi Mosque by the Palestinians, are one of the sticking points in ongoing negotiations on the Al-Khalil handover.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

U.S. Diplomat Arrives in Kabul

KABUL -- A U.S. diplomat has made a brief visit to the Afghan capital, the first American officials to come here since the Taleban militant captured the city three months ago, the official radio reported Wednesday.

U.S. Deputy Ambassador John Holtzman to Pakistan arrived Tuesday for a visit during which he met with Mullah Mohammed Hassan, vice-president of the Taleban council in Kabul, as well as deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammed Stanakzai, Radio Sharia said.

Hassan reiterated the Taleban's policy of forging friendly ties with all countries and of "establishing strong relations with the United States based on respect for territorial integrity, national sovereignty and independence," the radio reported.

Hassan told the U.S. diplomat the Taleban were cracking down on drugs banning poppy and hashish production, Radio Sharia said.

Afghanistan ranks alongside Burma as one of the world's main poppy producing countries, with some 2,200 tons of opium produced in 1995 according to UN figures.

Poppy sap is refined to produce opium and heroin.

Sher Stanakzai told Holtzman

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Jordanian Protestors Clash With Police Over Israeli Trade Fair

AMMAN – About 1,500 Jordanian demonstrators clashed with police on Wednesday as they held a sit-in and called for a general strike to protest the holding of an Israeli trade fair in Amman.

Members of Jordanian unions and political parties opposed to the normalization of relations with Israel struggled with about 500 police as they tried to force their way into the trade fair.

Police pushed the protestors back to about 400 meters (yards) from the fair and formed a cordon around the building.

The head of the group, former Jordanian Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat, called for a "three-day

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TEHRAN TIMES

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In the Name of God

That He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, though the guilty disliked.

(HOLY QORAN) (8:8)

OPINION

Agreement on Basic Concepts Prerequisite to Fruitful Critical Dialogue

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati's visit to Italy and the statements of the Italian officials on the Tehran-Rome relations show that Europe has realized Iran's pivotal role in the Persian Gulf and Middle East.

Moreover, the visit underlines Europe's determination not to go along with the U.S. unjustified move to isolate Iran. Thus, following an independent line in foreign policy by the European Union is praiseworthy because it enormously contributes to the world peace.

Also, the Italian Foreign Ministry expressed hope that the policy of holding a critical dialogue with Tehran would bring the Islamic Republic of Iran closer to Europe and reintegrate it with international community.

A critical dialogue or constructive talks, or whatever we call it, can yield concrete results if Iran's European partners do not base their arguments on fixed concepts. Considering that there are differences of opinion and misunderstandings between the two sides on certain issues including terrorism and human rights, adopting an inflexible approach by the European countries will make harmony and understanding unattainable.

The main hurdle in the way of achieving a positive result through holding talks is disagreement between the two sides on the definition of some basic concepts. For instance, the human rights, as defined by the West, may not suit others, for there are marked disparities between the Western and Eastern cultures.

Iran's cultural values sprout from its civilization and predominant religion of Islam. In the same manner, the cultural values in the West stem from Western civilization and Christianity.

Based on their religion and ancient civilization, the Iranians hold all other cultures and religions, including the Western civilization and Christianity, in high esteem. It is also acknowledged that even some Iranian customs have been adopted from the Western civilization. Indeed there has been a reciprocal, cross-cultural exchange between the two cultures and civilizations.

This is why the two sides have similar socio-cultural values in many areas. However in certain fields, the Iranian values do not necessarily tally with those in the West. These are the areas that demand more elaboration and clarification by both sides. And it is worth mentioning here that cooperation with the West is always welcomed by Iran, but total assimilation of Western values is neither feasible nor possible.

Iranians are not out to impose their values on others, and the West should not try to impose its values on other countries either. If the Western countries agree to this, the critical dialogue will bear fruit and surely benefit both sides.

Iran, Turkey Hold Talks on Border Security

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey here Tuesday held first round of talks on border security at the 14th Iran-Turkey joint session.

The officials of the two countries worked on some of the current sensitive and complicated issues related to security matters, an IRNA report said.

In the first round of talks, Elyas Aksui, the deputy interior minister of Turkey and head of delegation, stressed the significance and necessity of promotion of bilateral cooperation in security matters. He called for mutual respect for the observation of territorial integrity of the two nations, stating that the continuation of such cooperation was crucial in the promotion of Tehran-Ankara relations.

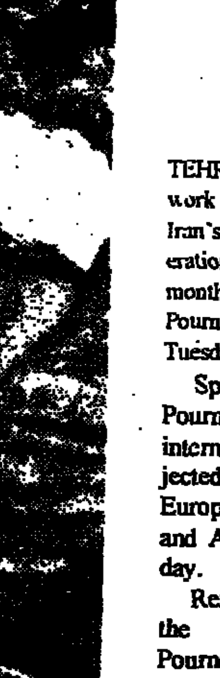
The head of Turkish delegation expressed his country's willingness to promote relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran at the best possible level. He once more claimed the existence of the bases belonging to the Turkish opposition on the borders of Iran.

He also called for the strengthening of relations between the two countries, especially in the area of security affairs.

The Director General of Iranian Interior Ministry's Security Department and head of Iranian delegation, Motahhar, hinted at the religious, cultural and historical commonalities of the two countries, saying that not a single base of the Turkish opposition faction, PKK, exists on the Iranian territory.

He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran will not allow any individual or faction to damage the cordial relations between Iran and Turkey.

(Contd on Pg.14)



TEHRAN (Jan. 8) — The head of Turkish delegation, following his talks with Iranian Interior Ministry officials, refuses to answer the reporters' questions on border security issues between Iran and Turkey.

Velayati Holds Talks With Italian Counterpart

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Enhancement of Tehran-Rome bilateral relations was reviewed in a meeting between the Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and his Italian counterpart Lamberto Dini in Rome on Tuesday.

The Italian foreign minister expressed concern over the consolidation of the two countries' bilateral cooperation at regional and international forums, saying it would be to the interest of the two nations.

He noted, "We oppose the United States' trade sanctions against Iran as an internationally unacceptable practice." He added that his country is aware of Iran's economic and political importance.

The Italian minister of foreign affairs underlined that in order to promote mutual understanding, there exists the need to further expand multilateral relations between Iran and the European Union (EU)."

Emphasizing the important role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in preservation of regional stability, Dini lauded the Islamic Iran for its peace initiatives and constructive efforts in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

The Iranian foreign minister, for his part, expressed satisfaction over expansion of Iran-Italy multilateral relations and called for further promotion of cooperation in industrial sectors particularly in oil, petrochemicals and construction of ports.

He also announced his support for exchange of political and parliamentary delegations as well as formation of parliamentary friendship groups of the two nations, welcoming a proposal made by his Italian counterpart on setting up the second Irano-Italian air link.

"Non-interference of other countries in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, abstinence of warring factions from engaging in conflicts and participation of all groups in peace settlement are the criteria for peace in Afghanistan," stated Velayati.

Velayati is in Rome on a two-day visit at the invitation of Dini, his Italian counterpart.

On the same day, Velayati met with Vatican Secretary of State Angelo Sodano discussing the two countries' cooperation at international communities and forums.

The two officials also stressed exchange of views between Muslim and Christian thinkers in order to protect common religious values between the two religions.

Meanwhile, Sodano said that Iran is a country where Muslims and different religious minorities live peacefully together.

President Felicitates Heads of Muslim States

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani cabled message of felicitation to the heads of Muslim countries, on the eve of holy month of Ramadan.

Wishing prosperity for world Muslims, the president expressed hope that during the holy month, Muslim nations develop the spiritual aspects of humanity and fulfill the lofty objectives of Islamic ideology so that they reinforce solidarity among themselves.



IRIB Int'l Network to Become Operational

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The international network of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting will become operational within the next five months, Deputy Chief of the IRIB, Pournejati, announced in Zanjan Tuesday.

Speaking to the reporters, Pournejati said that the IRIB's international network is projected to air various programs for European, American, African and Asian countries 20 hours a day.

Referring to the sensitivity of the presidential elections, Pournejati said that the IRIB will broadcast particular programs such as round tables with participation of different political groups.



Expansion of Tehran-Sarajevo Ties Discussed

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The latest developments in Bosnia and promotion of Tehran-Sarayevo bilateral relations and cooperation were reviewed in a meeting on Tuesday between the Iranian ambassador to Sarajevo and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic.

In the meeting, the Iranian envoy Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian briefed the Bosnian president on his recent tour to Iran.

He also conveyed the felicitation message of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on the eve of the holy lunar month of Ramadhan to President Izetbegovic, IRNA reported.

Iranology Center Inaugurated in Yerevan

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — An Iranology center was inaugurated in the Armenian capital city of Yerevan on Tuesday, an IRNA report said.

Professor Garnik Astryan, head of the center, said that the center will become engaged in cultural research in the Caucasus and the Middle East regions, both of which extensively share cultural and traditional ties with Iran and have common customs and art.

Gilan Province, Azerbaijan Republic to Expand Cultural Ties

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Promotion of cultural and economic relations between Gilan Province of Iran and Azerbaijan Republic is to be discussed during talks between the Azeri officials and the visiting Iranian delegation.

The politico-economic delegation of Iran led by Governor General of northern province of Gilan Ali Akbar Tahaei left Astara, Gilan Province, Wednesday morning for the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The visit of the Iranian delegation is aimed at expansion of cultural and economic relations between Gilan Province and Azerbaijan Republic.

Expansion of cultural ties between the cities of Astara and Talesh, in this province, and the cities of Lankaran and Astara in Azerbaijan Republic will also be discussed by the Iranian and Azeri officials.

Highest Number of Thalassemia Patients in Mazandaran

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Mazandaran, the northern province of Iran, has the highest number of thalassemia patients throughout the country, Mazandaran Medical Sciences University announced on Wednesday.

An IRNA report from Sari quoted Farhang Baba Mahmoudi, dean of the university, as saying that 10-12 percent of 4,200,000 population of the province are suffering from thalassemia minor.

In average, three percent of the total population of the country are afflicted by thalassemia minor.

Meanwhile, an official from the provincial Blood Transfusion Center, Mousa Azimi, attributed the high percentage of thalassemia patients in Mazandaran Province to inter-family marriages.

According to Azimi, a total of 3,000 patients in the province are suffering from thalassemia major and about 420,000 from thalassemia minor.

Bodies of 60 Martyrs of Sacred Defense Handed Over to Iran

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iranian officials received bodies of sixty martyrs of the eight-year Sacred Defense (1980-1988) at the Shalamcheh border point on Tuesday.

According to IRNA, the bodies of the martyrs were recovered from Al-Emarah area where the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran launched Walfajr preliminary operation against the enemy during the eight years of Iraqi-Imposed war.

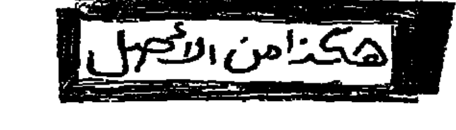
The Islamic Republic of Iran in turn delivered the remains of 77 Iraqi military personnel to the Iraqi officials.

In the process of the exchange of bodies, Brigadier General Mirfeisal Baqerzadeh, head of the Iranian committee in charge of searching for those missing in action (MIAs) exchanged views with his Iraqi counterpart, Brigadier General Rabah Ali on a continued joint effort for allocating and recovering the bodies lost in the course of war and the exchange of the prisoners of war of the two countries.

General Baqerzadeh also emphasized on expediting the process of freeing of the rest of the Iranian POWs in Iraq.

He also stated that if Iraq was not willing to go on with the task of search for bodies of the victims, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to shoulder the responsibility to find both Iraqi and Iranian victims's bodies lost during the eight years of war on the Iraqi soil, bearing all the cost of expedition.





Feature

Facets of Countries

Spotlight: Iceland

The Happiest People on Earth



A farm family near Skalholt in southern Iceland.

In a poll of 18 nations, The Gallup Organization discovered that Icelanders are the happiest people alive. All 267,809 of them. Eighty-two percent are satisfied with their personal lives. The United States ranked fifth at 72 percent; Japan came in seventh with 42 percent.

Some people would say that happy Iceland is a statiscial fluke. This is a country so small, an ordinary citizen can make an appointment to see the president.

True, Iceland is no utopia. Icelanders are big boozers, with a fishing tradition of binge drinking. Almost a third of the births are out of wedlock. But that's what makes the Gallup study so interesting. *Icelanders have problems* like the rest of us, yet they are happy with their lot. So what gives?

Consider Thorir Hlynur Thorisson, 28. For his vacation, he spent a month working 16-hour days, seven days a week, as *a fishing guide*. It was "heaven on earth," he says. Then after a single night off, he was back at his regular job—on a fishing boat, working six hours on, six hours off, around the clock.

We would call Hlynur a workaholic; but so are most of his compatriots. It pays off. With a per capita gross domestic product of $19,905 (the U.S. figure is $27,541), Icelanders are among the wealthiest people on earth. Their tax dollars buy them excellent education and medical care. Iceland has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world, and almost the highest longevity.

The dour Swill have a well-run state and all their material needs met, too, yet no one could accuse them of a cheerful outlook. Sociologist Thorolfur Thorlindsson of the University of Iceland believes the secret lies not in his country's comforts, but in its age-old discomforts. They have taught Icelanders to enjoy what they have.

Isolated in the cold North Atlantic, buffeted by a hostile sea, condemned to 20 hours of darkness each day in winter, the people have for centuries lived on the vagaries of the fish catch. "Our culture is colored by the harshness of nature," says Thorlindsson. "That's why Icelanders have a tolerant attitude to the problems of life. They don't expect the same sort of stability often expected in other nations."

And so it seems. Americans are considerably better off by material standards than ever before. Yet they seem less happy, less contented with their lot.

Like Icelanders, Americans are individualists. Where they seem to differ is in their sense of community. Iceland, known as the land of "fire and ice," is *about living with opposing* forces. It is one of the most active volcanic countries on earth, but has 4536 square miles of glacier—heat and cold, coexisting. No surprise then that its society can reconcile another set of opposing forces: individualism and *the needs of the community*.

Anyone who thinks Americans invented rugged individualism has only to visit Iceland. This nation has an ancient respect for independence. Way bacj ub tge tebtg century, Iceland was a commonwealth; today Icelanders *still place* high value on their freedom.

But here's the paradox: this individualism exists with a sense of community. For years I have known an Icelandic family that embraces a family drunk and an illegitimate child. This family never let them drift, like human flotsam, to be beached at some government insitution. "Icelanders have strong systems of support," says Thorlindsson.

Tolerance is not a hollow phrase in Iceland. The word for "stupid" is *heimskur*, which roughly means "comes from home"—or as we would say, provincial or narrow-minded. Icelanders believe only a dolt is unable to see the other fellow's position. In this sense, they might find some of what passes for political debate in the United States absolutely *heimskur*.

Mos Icelanders travel out into the world as young adults. They learn that theirs is not the only way of doing things. Yet this doesn't translate into contempt for their own land and its history.

The 12th century Icelandic sagas, studied at universities the world over, are revered at home. Turn on the radio and at the top of the charts is Bubbi Morthens, a troubadour.

Last summer in the lava fields of Iceland's interior, accountant Sigmar Bjornsson pointed out to me a cave where thieves had hidden. He showed me where they stored their weapons, where the villages attacked, told me how one of the thieves, who had only one leg, walked on his hands to the glacier on the horizon.

"When did they hole up here?" I asked.

"About 900 years ago" was the answer. Nearly a millennium, and the myth is still alive.

How many Americans have that kind of familiarity with their nation's past, its myths, its history? How many even care?

I wish America's multiculturalists and historical revisionists would grasp what Icelanders understand: trashing your nation's myths is the wrong way to create a better society. "A nation has to be tolerant of newcomers," says psychiatrist Niel Micklem. "But if it loses its myths, it loses its center."

Maybe I'm wrong. But I suspect that this loss of "center" is *what makes so many* Westerners unhappy amid their affluence.

(Courtesy of Reader's Digest, Sept. 1996.)

Travelogue

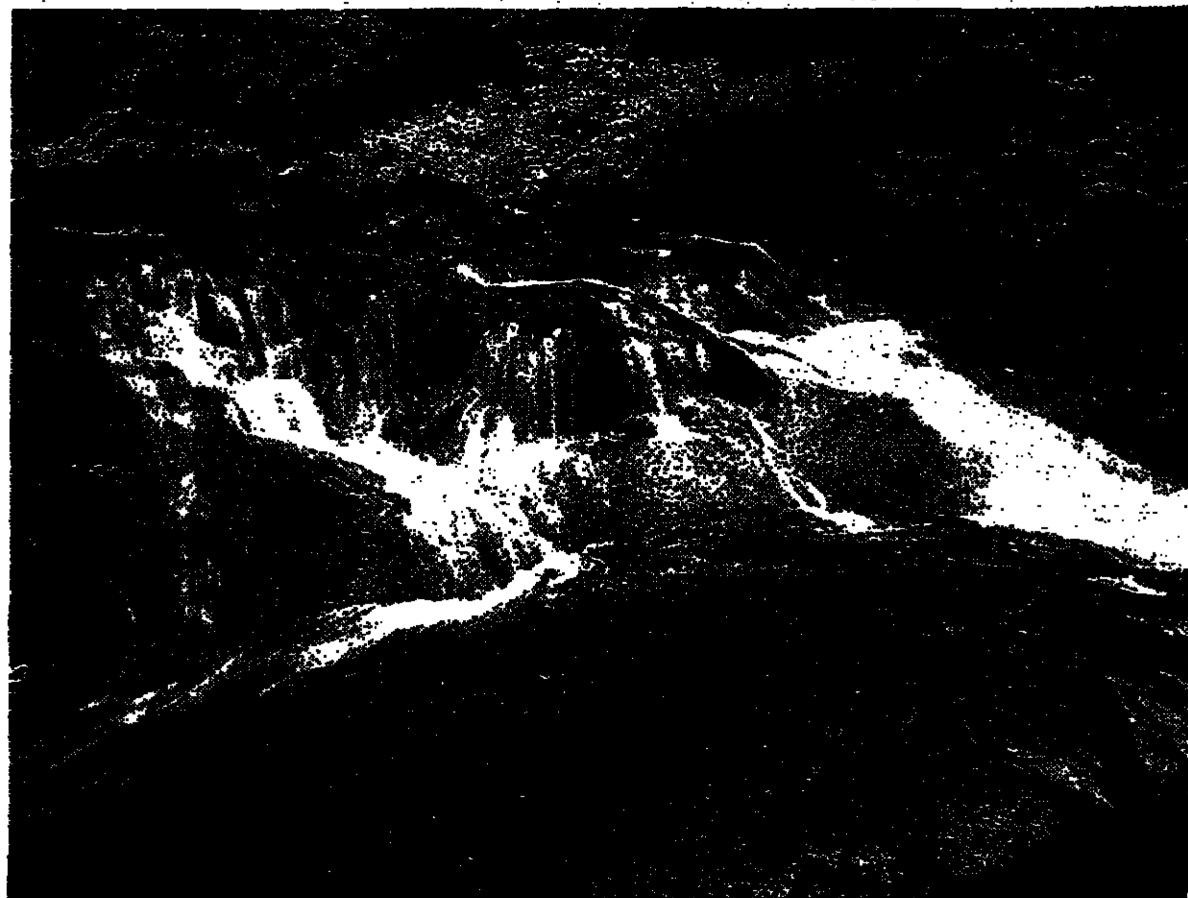
The Bracken: Germany's Mountain of Unity

It is not easy to determine definitively whence the Brocken drew its particular symbolic strength. Over the centuries, countless sagas had been woven around northern Germany's highest mountain, but that in itself would certainly not have been sufficient to turn the Brocken into the Germans' mountain of longing. That required the additional help of Germany's greatest poet, Goethe that is, not Heine. With great passion, and totally in the mode of the "Sturm und Drang" movement, Goethe had longed to set foot one day on the "holy peak" of the Brocken. Finally, on December 10, 1777, a radiant winter's day, he partook of this great joy. Decades later the Brocken was to be poetically enshrined in the highest grandeur ever accorded a German mountain: Goethe integrated it into his "Faust" in the shape of the "Blocksberg."

Starting from Ilsenburg you can make the most stunning, if also the steepest, ascent to the Brocken. The path leads along the charming bank of the Ilse through the sparse, light-filled beech and oak forests of the lower Harz district. Those for whom the ascent on foot is too strenuous would do best to travel from Ilsenburg to Schierke where instead they can climb into the "Brockenbahn." A "good old" steam engine carries the genuinely, and not so genuinely, foot-sore to the summit in half an hour. And the sight of the chuffing, puffing, whistling monster is enough to cause anyone, not just children, to gape in awe.

The Brocken train service was discontinued with the erection of the "Iron Curtain." The summit of the Brocken was declared a "restricted military area" and blocked off by a concercete wall three meters high. In the jargon of the GDR authorities it was called the "highest point in the socialist defensive wall." The Brocken, a fateful German mountain. At that moment it regained its old symbolic potential—dating from the time of the wars of liberation—as the mountain of the much-longed for German unification. On Sunday, December 3, 1989 the gate in the Brocken's defensive wall was finally opened for the waiting hikers who had been demanding free access to the Brocken with the aid of banners and chanting. "A free Brocken for free citizens!". Since then, thousands of people visit the Brocken every day, on foot, by mountain bike, in horse-drawn carriages, or on the Brocken train. Some days there are up to 15,000 people on the summit. Then it is difficult to discern anything of the one-time secrets of the Brocken, to say nothing of the "sublime spectacle that moves the soul to prayer." What then holds sway between the grilled sausage stands and the toilets is not pious stupefaction but hustle and bustle. Literally, all hell is let loose, and that by its very nature has its drawbacks. Mass tourism at the heart of a national park is anachronistic.

And yet even the kind of general commotion that sometimes reigns on this cult mountain has a tradition. It is part and parcel of the essence of the Brocken that it gives rise to contradictory impressions. The mountain, according to Heine, has something "Germanically peaceful, understanding, tolerant," and at the same time crazy, confusing and chaotic about it. It inspires far-sightedness and inner contemplation, and sometimes too it befuddles the spirit. There have been wild fun and laughter on the Brocken for hundreds of years. Hein, summarizes this tersely: "The Brocken is German."



The steep path to the Brocken along the Ilse.

The Mail

Sir,

We are Amnesty International members and we know there has already been a lot of media interest in the question of human rights abuses perpetrated against women, children and citizens in Afghanistan following the Taleban takeover of Kabul.

You do not ignore the importance of international pressure. That is the reason why we ask you to issue a clear statement to the Afghan government that the world's governments in general and human rights associations in particular should not ignore abuses of human rights. We take no position on the matter of political recognition of the government itself but we ask Kabul officials to preserve the fundamental rights of women embodied in the recommendation of the Beijing UN World Conference on Women.

These are denied their most fundamental rights following the imposition of strict Islamic law by the Taleban forces: obligation to stay indoors, to be veiled, some displaced and forced to leave their jobs, etc...We believe that women physically restricted under Taleban codes only by reason of their gender may be considered prisoners of conscience.

We thank you for the action you may exert on the Afghan officials.

Sincerely yours,

Y. Stille, et. al.
Couvin, Belgium

Dear Sir,

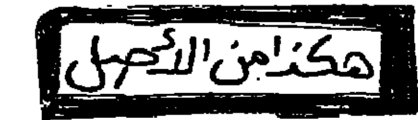
I am writing to express my extreme disquiet concerning human rights abuses against women in Afghanistan being perpetrated at present.

The Taleban have imposed strict Islamic law on women and are thereby denying these women some of their most fundamental rights, including the right of association, freedom of expression, and employment.

I urge you through your esteemed newspaper to exert your influence on the Taleban, or any new government in Afghanistan of which the Taleban may be a major part, to obtain guarantees that human rights, including the fundamental rights of women, will be respected.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) Nicola Greenwood
Loughborough, England



Iran and Poland for Expansion of Commercial Cooperation

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The Polish Deputy Prime Minister Miroslaw Pietrewicz in a meeting in Warsaw Tuesday with the Iranian Ambassador to Poland Mohammad Taheri, called for the expansion of commercial and technical cooperation with the Iranian private sector, saying that the West-ward orientated Polish private sector is an impediment to the growth of his country's healthy economy.

He expressed his country's deep interest on setting up oil and gas cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, IRNA reported.

Pietrewicz stated that Poland gave top priority to the use of various kinds of energy resources, adding that the privatization of the oil and gas industries should basically help the economy of his country.

He expressed hope that the Irano-Polish Joint Economic Commission would ease the way for further implementation of the joint plans.

The Iranian ambassador on his part referred to the two countries' bilateral cooperation in oil and petrochemical sectors and regarded Tehran-Warsaw promotion of economic relations as among the goals of the Iranian Embassy in Warsaw.

He said that in his meeting earlier with the Polish president he mooted Irano-Polish cooperation in the field of energy which met the support of the Polish president.

Over 38 Billion Rials Allocated to Deprived Regions

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – Head of the President Office for Development of the Deprived Regions Jalil Besharati announced Wednesday that over 38 billion rials was allocated to the implementation of 342 construction and development projects in the deprived regions.

He noted that the fund was provided from the annual budget for eradication of deprivation.

Besharati added that the fund approved by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will be allocated to construction of roads, medical and health centers, water and power supplies and improvement of people's living conditions in remote and deprived villages all over the country.

He further underlined that President Rafsanjani has also issued a special order for speeding up the construction operation of the projects.

Besharati noted that several executive organs including the Construction Jihad Ministry, Health Ministry, Ministry of Energy as well as governorates will cooperate to implement the development projects in remote areas.

He said that the construction projects in the deprived regions in Khorasan Province were successfully underway and that some 42 development projects have so far been completed in the province.

Elaborating on the outcome of President Rafsanjani's visit to Kohkilouyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, Besharati reiterated that the president allocated more than 5 billion rials to the implementation of 55 new development projects in this province.

He added that the required fund for some 85 development projects in Khuzestan Province's rural areas has been provided by the annual budget for eradication of deprivation.

Besharati said that preparatory measures have been taken to implement 30 construction projects in Fars Province including construction of roads and water and power supplies in rural areas.

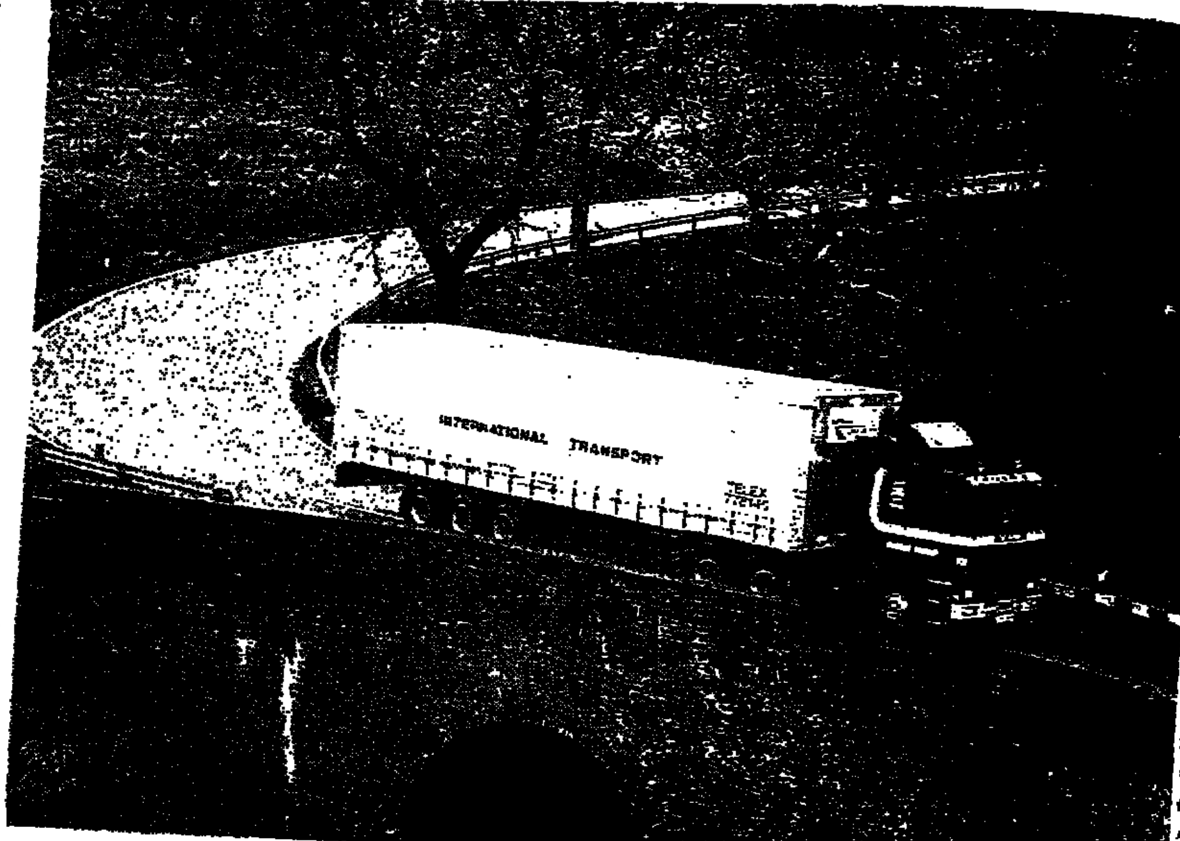
Expansion of Iran-Mali Relations Discussed

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador in Mali Mahmoud Hosseinali-Zadeh in a meeting on Tuesday in Bamako with the Malian minister of rural development and the environment reviewed different avenues for bolstering relations between the two countries.

The Malian minister is to pay a visit to Iran in the near future at the invitation of Iranian Minister of Construction Jihad, Gholamreza Forouzesh, IRNA repoorted.

Conference on Role of Transportation in Economy Opens



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Minister of Road and Transport, Akbar Torkan, opened a conference on the role of ground transportation in economy yesterday.

The conference will study the strategies, rules and regulations, potentials and bottlenecks of ground transportation as well as investment in the industry.

Torkan touched on the situation of ground transportation system in the country and said that in order to reform the system of transportation of goods, several terminals have been built.

He added that so far 18 transportation companies and terminals have been created in the country, and that efforts are underway to create a terminal in each big province or industrial city. The minister said that these companies will soon be computerized.

Iran Sends Truckloads of Humanitarian Aid to Azerbaijan

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some 70 truckloads of relief supplies donated by people of Gilan province for the needy Azeri families were dispatched from Astara on Wednesday.

Gilan province residents donated aid for the Azeri families in the cities of Astara and Lankaran in Azerbaijan republic as well as Azeri refugees settled at the Imisheli refugee camp, IRNA reported.

Some 57 tons of foodstuff, 210 blankets, and large quantities of garments and fuel were among goods donated.

Meanwhile, Iran's Ambassador to Baku Alireza Bigdeli Tuesday in Baku announced that three convoy of humanitarian aid from Iranian nation will be sent for the Azeri people during the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, to start Saturday.

He made the remark in a meeting with Azeri Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Commission in Charge of Humanitarian Aid, Izzet Rostamov.

Appreciating Iran's humanitarian aids for the Azeri nation, the Azeri official called for continued aid by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran Helps Tajikistan Join Fiber-Optic Cabling Project

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Iran will assist Tajikistan to join the fiber-optic cabling project which is being installed from Shanghai, China, to Frankfurt, Germany, Director General of the Post, Telephone and Telegraph Ministry, Mohammad Reza Sabour said here Wednesday.

Under a contract recently signed between Tehran and Dushanbe, the Islamic Republic of Iran is to help fiber-optic cabling project by the end of the current year.

Furthermore, during the recent visit to Armenia of the Deputy PTT Minister for international affairs, Sarraf, the two sides agreed that Iran help modernize and extend the telecommunication network of Armenia. To this end Iran has undertaken to install 100,000 telephone numbers in one Armenian provinces.

Taking advantage of the experiences of its learned experts and modern telcommunication systems and technology, Iran's PTT Ministry has won international bids for modernizing and extending telecommuniations networks of a number of countries especially in Central Asia, Sabour added.

Hyundai-Vietnam Auto Joint Venture Licence Denied

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Faced with too many vehicle assembly licences granted in recent years, Vietnam has for the first time denied a car factory proposal, it was reported Tuesday.

The Vernacular Lao Dong (Union) said Prime Minister Vo Von Kiet, had last Friday refused a proposal forwarded by the Planning and Investment Ministry for a licence to set up Vietnam Hyundai Auto Joint Venture Company involving the South Korean giant, Hyundai, an IRNA-Bernama dispatch reported.

The official daily quoted Kiet as saying that the reason was that there were too many auto joint venture projects in the country.

All projects worth more than $100 million and especially auto assembly licences must be approved by the prime minister.

Currently, there are 14 licenced automobile joint ventures in Vietnam involving some of the world's major car makers attracted by the long term potential of the country's fast growing economy and market of 77 million people.

The first vehicle production plant joint venture involving Malaysia was between national car maker Proton, Mitsubishi and a Vietnamese partner.

The last licence was granted to Nissan Motor Co. last year.

The $110 million plant in the central province will involve Nissan TCM PTY Ltd, a joint venture between Nissan, Malaysia's Tan Chong and Sons SDN BHD, Japanese trading house, Marubeni Corporation and local partners, Danang Auto Mechanical Factory.

Industry officials said this was probably the first time a licence for an automobile project was denied and the brake on granting automobile assembly joint ventures was expected as there were too many players.

They said the market for cars was still too small and was only expected to see salient signs of development only after the year 2000.

For the moment most of the car makers are only here to gain a foothold, one official said.

The report said the projects are in various stages of development including some which had started up operations but with still unseen economic results.

Some of the automaking projects were on the verge of starting up production while some plants were still being built, the report said.

The daily also said that the government had requested the Planning and Investment Ministry to review the development of the existing licensed projects especially in the transfer of technology and the use of local parts.

Assets of Iranian National Bank Increase by %16

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The total assets of the Iranian National Bank, by Dec. 20, 1996, amounted to 44,746 billion rials. The assests include gold, silver, banknotes, deposits, government bonds and foreign currency reserve.

Compared with the similar period of the previous year, the assets indicate a 16-percent increase, according to the public relations office of the bank.

The report released by the offic[illegible] further revealed that the mone[illegible] including both Iranian and foreig[illegible] currencies, deposited with the ban[illegible] by Dec. 20 showed a rise by 1[illegible] percent compared with the simila[illegible] period in the previous year. Th[illegible] deposits totaled 31,820 billio[illegible] rials, the report added.

Also, by Dec. 20, the ban[illegible] granted a total credit of 20,0[illegible] billion rials, which increased by 1[illegible] percent compared with the simil[illegible] period in the previous year.

Infrastructure Sector May Impede India's Economic Growth

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - India's Union Power Minister S. Venugopalachari yesterday admitted that the target of seven percent economic and 12 percent industrial growth could be out of reach due to slow growth in infrastructure sector including power and transport.

Speaking at the conference on "Global Climate Change" in New Delhi, the minister said some economists have estimated that power shortages cost Indian industry a whopping 2.7 billion dollars per year, which is equivalent to 1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), IRNA reported.

Poor maintenance and upkeep of thermal power plants, accounting for 75 percent of the country's power generating capacity, coupled with high transmission and distribution losses, have led to peak power deficit to about 17 percent in 1996 along with energy shortage of about 9.5 percent, he said.

We need to minimize our transmission and distribution losses to meet the rising demands of industry, rural development, domestic sector and communication, added the minister.

Iran Imports 52 Tons of Meat From Kazakhstan

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The first consignment of mutton weighing 52 tons purchased by Iran from Kazakhstan was shipped to Iran on Wednesday.

The consignment was part of contract for pruchase of 5,000 tons of meat from Kazakhstan by Iran during a five year long period, IRNA reported.

A delegation from Iran's Veterinary Organization along with a cleric had been sent to the republic to supervise the slaughter and packaging of the sheep.

Nakhodka FEA to Build 20 Timber Carrier

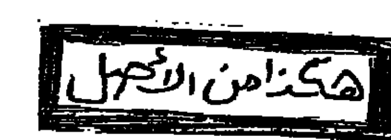
Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The Nakhodka Free Economic Area (FEA) is to build 20 specialized timber-carrying ships, each with a deadweight of 5,000 tons. They are to deliver timber from the ports of Russia's far east to Pacific rim countries, Sergei Dudnik, chairman of the FEA administrative committee, has told ITAR-TASS.

The timber carriers have been designed by engineers in Krasnoyarsk, a Siberian city. The first five timber carriers are to be built at the Krasnoyarsk shipyards and are to join the Nakhodka FEA fleet by the year 2000.

Then, orders for the building [illegible] timber carriers are to be plac[illegible] with shipbuilding yards in bo[illegible] Russia and foreign countrie[illegible] Nakhodka shipwrights hope to buil[illegible] several timber carriers on th[illegible] own.

The creation of timber-carrying fleet by the FEA [illegible] prompted by the fact that Russ[illegible] annually exports about 3.5 milli[illegible] cubic metres of timber throu[illegible] Nakhodka-based ports alone.



SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

FOOTBALL

Italians Want Redknapp to Save Roma

ROME: As Roma Coach Carlos Bianchi is on the verge of quitting and only a splash on the transfer market, possibly for Liverpool's Jamie Redknapp, could be enough to make him stay.
Roma, beaten 3-1 by Roy Hodgson's Inter Milan on Sunday, are struggling with only five wins in 15 matches under Bianchi, who was brought in this season to replace Carlo Mazzone.
Currently in the wrong half of the table, they have scored four points fewer than Mazzone at the same stage last season and have been dumped out of both the UEFA Cup and the Italian Cup.
Bianchi blames the lack of recruitment and is considering quitting, despite having a contract until the end of next season.
One answer to the club's problems could be Redknapp, the England international midfielder who Roma have been following for some time and for whom they are reportedly preparing an offer.

Spurs Sign Swiss Stopper

LONDON: Spurs boss Gerry Francis has beaten off Leeds to land Swiss Stopper Ramon Vega in a 3.75-million-pound deal.
The 26-year-old Cagliari Stopper, who impressed during Euro 96, has agreed a three-and-a-half-year contract with the White Hart Lane club.
Francis has been tracking Vega since the start of the season, although it had seemed the Serie A side were determined to hold onto him until the end of the season.
But the Sardinian club changed their mind after a disappointing campaign and Spurs chairman Alan Sugar flew back to London from his holiday in Florida to clinch the deal.

Sacchi Cracks the Whip

MILAN: AC Milan Coach Arrigo Sacchi has warned some of his players to shape up or ship out, following the Italian champions' humiliating 3-0 defeat at the hands of Lazio.
Sacchi made it clear on Tuesday he believes that some members of the squad are behaving like amateurs — and therefore have no place in Europe's top club of the past decade.
"Football is for professionals," he said, "and we have to stop trying to hide from that. If we are in this situation, it's the fault of everyone. And everyone has to assume their share of responsibility."

Blow for South Africa as Mark Fish Suspended

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa suffered a blow to their World Cup hopes on Tuesday, just days before they take on Zambia in Lusaka, when they learnt that star defender Mark Fish had been suspended for one match by world governing body FIFA.
Fish was booked twice in World Cup preliminary matches and, under FIFA rules, two bookings in two separate games constitutes an offense punishable by a one-match suspension.
South African Coach Clive Barker only learnt of the suspension on Tuesday, even though the South African Football Association (SAFA) was notified by FIFA last month.
"The notification of Fish's suspension reached our offices late in December while our staff was in recess," SAFA boss Solomon Morewa said on Tuesday.
"We picked up the notice from FIFA when we opened the mail on our return on Monday," he said.
"I immediately informed Clive early on Tuesday, who in turn told Fish."

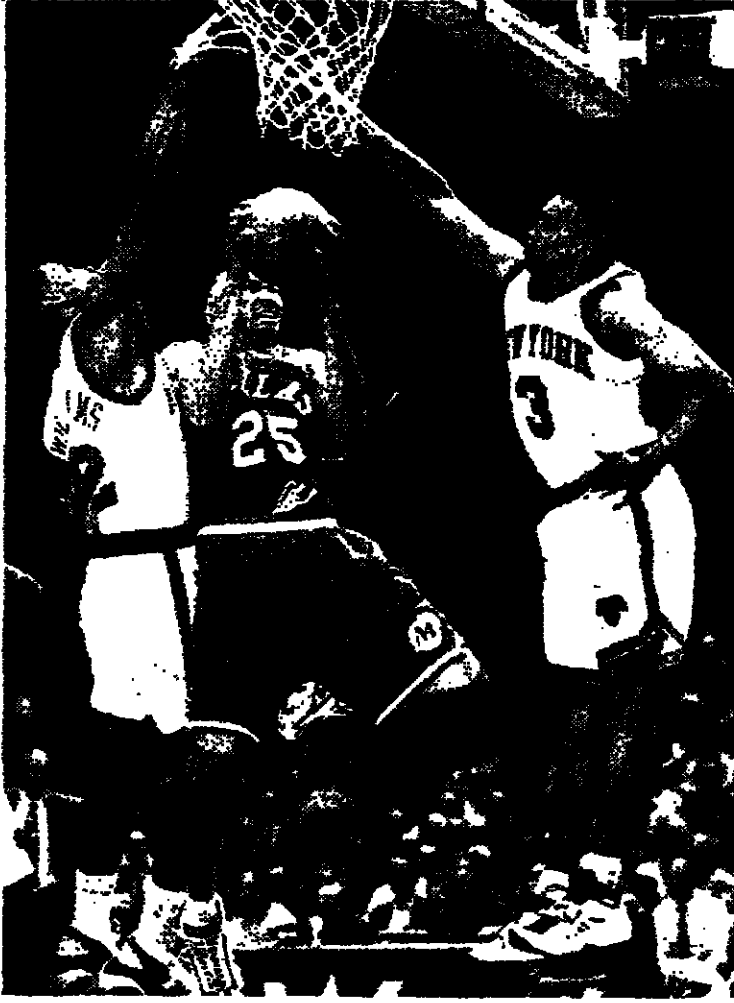
TENNIS

Seles Pulls Out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia: Defending champion Monica Seles has withdrawn from next week's Australian Open leaving organizers to put a brave face on their depleted bill.
Representatives of the four-time champion contacted Open tournament director Paul McNamee to say X-rays had revealed the world number two's right ring finger was broken in two places.
Seles fractured her finger between the tip and the knuckle while warming up for an exhibition tournament last month and she has not played since December 4.
Her U.S.-based publicist issued a statement saying the results of X-rays taken on the injured finger on Friday eliminated any hope of her playing the Open.

"I'm Back" Says Comeback Capriati

SYDNEY: American Jennifer Capriati gave her tennis rehabilitation further authenticity with a fighting three-sets victory over compatriot Chanda Rubin at the Sydney international tournament here Tuesday.
Capriati, out to wipe the slate clean after drug and shoplifting charges which all but snuffed out her precocious tennis career three years ago, rebuffed the higher-ranked Rubin, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in a 103-minute opening round match.
Capriati, 21 in March and ranked 36 in the world, was imbued by her success over the highly regarded Rubin and gave promise of making a go of her tennis career after her seamy past.
Beaming her trademark smile, Capriati announced "I'm back" after mastering the 17th-ranked Rubin, a semifinalist at last year's Australian Open, and the notorious unsettling winds on White City's center court.
"It's a great boost, it's like I'm back and that I still have what it takes to beat a player like Chanda and it shows I've come a long way since I played her last time," Capriati said of her last meeting with Rubin in Indian Wells, California, last March.



NEW YORK, NY, United States (Jan. 7): Dallas Marvericks Chris Gatling (C) makes his way to the basket as New York Knicks John Starks (R) and Buck Williams try to block in the first quarter in New York. The Knicks won 102-72. (AFP PHOTO)

Branson's Hot-Air Balloon Lands Safely in Algeria

LONDON — British millionaire businessman Richard Branson and his two-man crew landed their huge hot air and helium balloon safely in the Algerian desert Wednesday after a technical hitch scuttled plans to circle the earth nonstop in 18 days.

Project manager Mike Kendrick said in London early Wednesday that a helicopter "is within minutes of them. We have to secure the capsule and then get them back."

"The Eagle has landed. No damage to capsule," Branson said through a spokesman for his virgin transport and music empire at the Expedition Command Center in London.

He took the "Eagle" quote from the first American moon landing announcement of 1969. The balloon is actually named the Virgin Challenger.

Branson, Swede Per Lindstrand and Briton Alex Ritchie were "safe and well" after the two-ton balloon landed at 0729 GMT in the Saharan Desert 19 hours after liftoff from a Marrakesh air base in neighboring Morocco.

Branson told colleagues by satellite telephone that the crew's lives were saved by Ritchie, who climbed out of the capsule to release canisters, allowing the balloon to gain altitude over a mountain range.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to Alex. He saved our lives," Branson said.

The spokesman here said the balloon, which had surprised passengers and ground crew by jumping skyward at liftoff far quicker than planned, had suffered "a ballast versus helium problem," beginning around 0100 GMT. (AFP)



MARRAKESH, Morocco (Jan. 7): Richard Branson and his team fly over the Moroccan city of Marrakesh at the start of their attempt to circumnavigate the globe. (AFP PHOTO)

Understanding Kung Fu as Described by a Master

By Ja'far Qasempour Jahangir

Skills of Kung Fu



(Part 21)
These articles aim at introducing some of the main skills and moves of kung fu and Chinese boxing and familiarizing the readers with them to join famous schools and clubs. The study of martial arts without a trainer's help cannot be useful in every level and it is not possible to teach them in these articles. Hence, these articles are fruitful for those who intend to learn some of the kung fu skills. At the beginning, the trainee should learn the skills of standing and main moves and then deal with the skills of defense, strokes of hands and legs, and some kung fu self-defense skills to be described later. Have in mind that the above-mentioned skills are based on the main principles which a beginner needs for the advanced levels. To become a skillful person in martial arts requires much endurance and struggle and it takes you 10 years to become a master. There is no easy way for you to become a kung fu master within one night and incessant practice is the only key. You should be tested by a trainer if you want to know about your progress.



General Regulations of Teachings

The trainee should always consider his rival's capability and try to perform what he has learnt as well as possible. Never misuse your learnings. Endurance, patience and gentlemanliness are the most essential regulations. Never apply your power and skills while you have lost your temper. According to the philosophy of kung fu, nobility is spawned by power. The real power never needs enmity. Always try to become better than before. It is crystal clear that standing and walking are the most natural functions of body. All we do like moving our bodies or bending to lift something will be transferred to our bodies in the form of either movement or manner. The body has often an unbalanced position while one is walking and in particular fighting because only a part of the body is in contact with the ground, so it is enough to take his leg to make him fall. Hence, it is so important to keep the body in the most balanced position through balancing the legs.



DOUAOUDA, Algeria (Jan. 7): Algerian security forces are seen in a clash with activists near the seaside town of Douaouda. At least two activists were wounded in the shooting which occurred when Islamic activists tried to return to Douaouda.

(AFP PHOTO)

Taiwan Vice President in U.S. Despite Beijing's Protests

LOS ANGELES – Taiwan's Vice President Lien Chan arrived here Tuesday en route to Managua but kept a low-profile to avoid further bruising ties between Beijing and Washington.

The stopover drew sharp protest from Beijing, which regards Taiwan as a breakaway province and said the transit stop was aimed at bolstering Taiwan's international standing.

Beijing warned of serious consequences for U.S.-Chinese ties.

Lien went directly from the airport to the Bosh Beverly Hills Hotel without meeting with reporters, sending instead government spokesman Sui Chi to take questions.

"This is purely a transit stop," Sui said of Lien's visit. He leaves January 8 for Managua for the January 10 inauguration of Nicaraguan President-elect Arnoldo Aleman and will stay overnight in New York the following day.

Lien last transited the United States in August with a U.S. visa that required him to shun speeches and public gatherings in deference to Chinese sensitivity surrounding Taiwan's diplomatic ambitions.

"This is part of our pragmatic diplomacy," Sui said of the Managua visit. "We try to reach out and touch everyone. We mean no harm." (AFP)

Russia Blasts New York Police for Incident With Diplomats

NEW YORK – Russia Tuesday blasted New York police for an incident in which a Russian and a Belarussian diplomat were detained by police over a parking ticket that led to a scuffle.

"The conduct of the police officers was an act of provocation," said Yevgeny Menkes, a counsellor at the Russian mission to the United Nations.

Speaking at a news conference, Menkes also accused New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani of being too hasty in supporting the police version of the events, which the Russian official said was "far from being true."

The men were reportedly released after they presented documents showing they had diplomatic immunity.

The Russian Foreign Ministry maintains that its envoy was ill-treated and has asked for an apology.

Giuliani has asked that the two diplomats be removed from their posts.

Speaking at the news conference, the diplomats said they made no attempt to resist and immediately presented their documents to the officers. (AFP)

Protests Over Army's Use of Recruits to Test Nerve Gas Antidotes

BAIT-UL-MOQADDAS – The Israeli army tested nerve gas antidotes on recruits for years then destroyed key records without informing the soldiers about possible negative effects from the drugs, Israel radio reported Wednesday.

The radio said its investigation into the tests conducted on hundreds of soldiers in the 1970s and 1980s showed that two of the drugs administered as a possible antidote to nerve gas were later banned from use.

Soldiers who said they signed consent forms to undergo the experiments have lodged complaints that the army will not give them information about possible risks to their health from the tests, the radio said.

The radio quoted military sources as saying notes on the experiments were destroyed but that the tests posed no danger to the health of the soldiers and that the drugs administered have been used widely by armies around the world.

A member of Parliament has demanded an investigation into the affair, the radio said. (AFP)

King Hussein in Egypt for Talks With Mubarak

ASWAN, Egypt — King Hussein of Jordan arrived Wednesday in southern Egypt for a summit with President Hosni Mubarak to discuss the stalled negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians over Al-Khalil.

King Hussein was met at the Aswan Airport by Mubarak, along with Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzuri and several other members of the government.

The king was accompanied by a large delegation, including Jordanian Prime Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti.

The two heads of state toured Aswan and visited the large dam by the same name before heading to a hotel in the city for talks.

According to an Egyptian official, "obstacles created by Israel that have so far prevented concluding an accord on an Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron," (Al-Khalil) will be central topic at the summit. (AFP)

Persian Gulf Arabs Try to Ease Qatar-Bahrain War of Words

RIYADH – Persian Gulf Arab foreign ministers met in the Saudi capital on Tuesday to urge Bahrain and Qatar to stop their war of words over disputed islands, sandbanks and reefs.

Ministers from Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates met with their counterparts from Bahrain and Qatar in a bid to defuse tension over the disputed Hawar islands and nearby territory, Persian Gulf officials said.

The six members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) discussed the "principal elements" of a report on which an accord between Qatar and Bahrain would be based, said a statement issued after the meeting.

The six are due to meet again on Sunday in the Saudi capital to continue their work. (AFP)

Israeli Soldier Killed in Hezbollah Attack

TYRE, Lebanon — An Israeli soldier was killed and six others wounded Wednesday in a clash with Hezbollah at the edge of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon, security sources said.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hezbollah's military wing, said in a statement that its activist "foiled an infiltration attempt by an Israeli commando force across the Litani River, near the enemy position in Deir Sirian."

"A number of casualties fell among enemy ranks," the statement said.

The casualties brought the Israeli toll to one soldier killed and nine wounded on Wednesday. Three Israeli soldiers were injured earlier when their vehicle hit a mine planted by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

FIVE...

Palestinian officials warned Wednesday that talks on bringing self-rule to Al-Khalil were in crisis over Israel's refusal to honor commitments to withdraw from most of the rest of the West Bank this year.

"We are facing a real crisis," said Nabil abu Rudeina, a close advisor to Yasser Arafat after another round of late night talks between the Palestinian leader and U.S. mediator Dennis Ross which a Palestinian spokesman described as "extremely tense."

Palestinian and Israeli officials said the details of the long-delayed transfer of power in Al-Khalil were virtually finalized but that an agreement was blocked by Palestinian fears that Israel will not comply with further extensions of self-rule required under the 1995 Oslo peace accords.

Negotiations in recent days have centered on a letter of U.S. guarantees that would accompany a Al-Khalil pullout agreement, laying out both Israeli and Palestinian commitments for further steps in the peace process.

Palestinian and Israeli officials said both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Arafat had been so sure of reaching a deal that they had their staffs prepare for a midnight summit Tuesday to sign the accord.

But the encounter was cancelled at the last minute due to Arafat's fury over an Israeli proposal to postpone troop withdrawals from West Bank rural areas that were to be completed by September until as late as May 1999, the Oslo deadline for reaching a permanent Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

"The Israelis are trying to depart from the agreement that has been signed ... this is a violation and a threat to the whole peace process," Abu Rudenia told AFP on Wednesday.

"The current negotiations have not concluded any agreement, we have reached a quasi-stalemate," he said.

A senior Palestinian source said Arafat had summoned all the foreign representatives stationed in the Palestinian self-rule territories to brief them on the stalled negotiations and seek their governments' support in the showdown with Netanyahu's hardline administration.

Despite the apparent deadlock, Ross was expected to pursue his effort Wednesday to find a compromise timetable for further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank.

Palestinian press reports said he was trying to convince Arafat to accept a mid-1998 deadline for the final pullbacks, but the Palestinian leader had rejected this late Tuesday.

A senior Israeli official said Netanyahu was counting on U.S. pressure to bring Arafat around to the compromise date and permit the two leaders to sign the agreement on Al-Khalil, the last West Bank city still under occupation. (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

U.S.

that international economic aid would help the government fight drug trafficking, the main source of income for many poor people, by allowing it to boost development.

The move provoked international outrage and prompted warnings that the Taleban regime would not receive diplomatic recognition and that the flow of aid to the war-battered country could be stopped if the ultra-strict Taleban did not review their stance on women. (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

RUSSIA...

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's willingness to "take account of our concerns at the talks on amending the CFE" would be "the main indication of the seriousness of our (NATO) partners' intentions," Primakov added.

The 30 signatories to the CFE Treaty — 16 NATO members and 14 former members of the Warsaw Pact — are due to resume renegotiating the treaty in Vienna this month.

Russia aims to secure new limits on the ceilings for military deployments in eastern Europe ahead of any NATO offer of membership to Moscow's former Cold War allies in the region.

The Western alliance is expected to make such an offer at a summit in Madrid in July, and Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are tipped as the most likely candidates to join the alliance in the coming years. (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

JORDANIAN...

general strike to protest against the Israeli trade fair in Amman."

But he urged demonstrators to avoid enciting the police.

"The police are our brothers. They are like us, opposed to the normalization with Israel. We don't have any problems with them, but with the Zionist state," Obeidat said.

The organizer of the trade fair, Jordanian businessman Fajhri Nasser, told AFP that it would be opened by the Israeli ambassador to Jordan, Shimon Shamir, in the early afternoon, three hours behind schedule because of "technical reasons."

Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and has engaged in a series of agreements to expand economic and cultural ties with the Zionist state, moves which have been unpopular with a large part of the Jordanian population.

Several protestors shouted "Islam and Jihad (holy war) are the solution," with banners proclaiming opposition to peace with Israel.

The demonstrators pledged to continue their sit-in "indefinitely." (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

LEADER...

that it did not allow the enemies of Islam to keep even an inch of Iranian soil under their occupation."

Terming the Islamic Revolution in Iran as an indescribable event, Ayatollah Khamenei said:

"A country which was once the base of the U.S., its rulers were lackeys of the big powers, its wealth distributed among the ruling families, the role of religion was fading and people were pushed towards corruption, has now turned into a country whose government is independent, brave and popular, whose leaders and officials are faithful, whose armymen are pious and whose people are standing against such power as the U.S. Without any fear."

The meeting took place on the anniversary of a bloody uprising by the people of Qom against the former monarchial regime of Iran on January 9, 1978. (AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

IRAQ...

It was the second time since President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday was wounded in an attack December 12 that Iraq announced it had smashed a spy ring.

On December 20 the authorities said they had unmasked a spy network working for the United States and broadcast their confessions.

Washington dismissed the claims as propaganda. (AFP)

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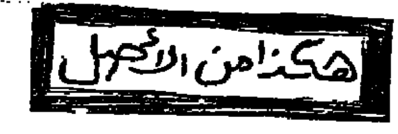
IRAN...

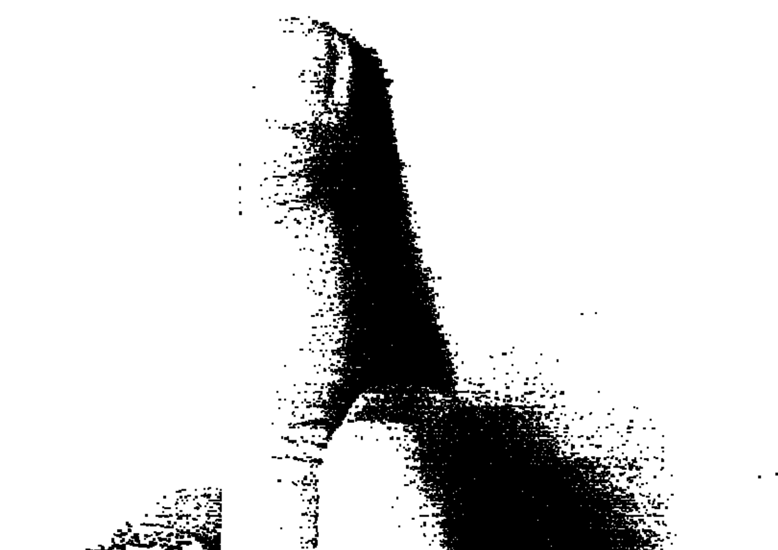
Motahhar deduced that the PKK issue is a security problem related to Turkey, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on the observation of its good neighborly relations with Turkey, is prepared to help Ankara resolve its plight."

He further stated that leaving behind eight years of Sacred Defense, the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken steps in the economic, political and security issues. "The two nations could, by resolving trivial border security problems, work together on further exchange of experiences, law enforcement science, and modern techniques of police training," he added.

The Interior Ministry official expressed regret over Turkish security officials being oblivious to their responsibility on the Turkish helicopter attack on the Iranian soil last August, and the sufferings of Iranians and especially of those pilgrims heading for Syria through Turkey.

Motahhar finally called on Turkey to officially and clearly announce its stance on the issue and remove all the barriers on security between the two nations of Turkey and Iran."





Gala at Gunpoint

Peru's President Fujimori confronts a hostage crisis by a band of rebels he thought he had defeated.

The place to be in Lima last Tuesday night (last week) was the elaborate residential compound of Japan's veteran ambassador to Peru, Morihisa Aoki. In recent years Aoki's receptions have enjoyed an enviable acclaim, thanks to the munificence of his banquet table and glitter of his guest lists. And last wweek's party commemorating the birthday of Emperor Akihito (he turned 63 this year) was no exception. More than 1,000 invitations were sent out, and by 8 p.m. anyone interested in glimpsing a real-life Who's Who in Lima only needed to peek over the embassy's garden wall, where more than 600 guests, largely government officials, foreign diplomats and corporate executives, were preparing to make a run at the sushi buffet and raise their pisco sours to toast Aoki's hospitality. Even Peru's President Alberto Fujimori, the son of Japanese immigrants, was expected. His mother Rosa, brother Pedro and sista Juana were already there.

At 8:35, however, the birthday party came to a crashing halt. In quick succession, a hold was blown in a retaining wall from an adjoining house, hand grenades were thrown at the embassy guardhouse and about 25 rebels belonging to a group known as the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement stormed into the compound. As the insurgents engaged police in a ferocious gunbattle, everyone—Peruvian ministers, blue-chip business tycoons, assembled diplomats and their wives—dropped to the ground. "Don't lift your head," the rebels barked, "or it'll be shot off."

Thus was launched what is possibly the single most audacious act in the history of terrorist hostage taking. The prominence of the prisoners, along with the fact that the siege was technically taking place on the soil of a foreign embassy, turned what might have been simply a debilitating domestic emergency in Peru into an international scandal. It dealt a staggering blow to Fujimori, who has staked much of his political fortune on stamping out homegrown terrorism. At the same time, it lent worldwide recognition to a group of insurgents that Fujimori only two years ago dismissed as a spent force. With some 74 hostages still in rebel hands to date, Fujimori faced an appalling choice: confrontation or accommodation. Challenging the terrorists would risk the remaining hostages' lives. Giving in to rebel demands, however, would encourage similar hostage taking in the future and open the door to a violent past that the president has claimed to have welded shut.

The prominence of the prisoners, along with the fact that the siege was technically taking place on the soil of a foreign embassy, turned what might have been simply a debilitating domestic emergency in Peru into an international scandal.

It is a dilemma no head of state could envy, and it took Fujimori's security forces completely by surprise. In recent months they had become convinced that they had won the war on terrorism that Peru had been fighting for more than 15 years. Forty minutes after the initial attack, the police withdrew from the compound and began shouting at the guerillas. The guerillas yelled back the suggestion that the security squads go find themselves a megaphone. When police lobbed tear gas into the compound, the rebels simply pulled on their gas masks while the hostages sputtered and choked.

Three hours after the seizure, communications were established and the insurgents gradually began releasing some 300 women and elderly people (including Fujimori's mother and sister). In phone calls to local television and radio stations, the rebels then issued a list of demands. Among them: safe passage to a haven in the Amazon jungle and release of about 450 comrades being held in various jails, where conditions are so harsh that prisoners are said to be trapping rats to feed themselves.

Any hopes that the initial hostage release presaged a weakening of the insurgents' will were dampened Wednesday (last week) when the commander of the rebel operation announced that if the government did not open talks within one hour, he would start executing hostages. Fortunately, the deadline passed safely—a reprieve that seemed to underscore Tupac Amaru's reputation for favoring bargains over bloodshed.

Tupac Amaru has always been something of a poor cousin to Peru's most infamous terrorist group, the Maoist-inspired Shining Path, which nearly succeeded in its violent bid to topple the Peruvian state in the early 1990s. Smaller than its notorious rival, Tupac Amaru drew inspiration not from China but from Cuba, and recruits from the country's farthest shantytowns of the dispossessed poor. The organization's name has a bloody history. It first belonged to the nephew and heir of Atahualpa, the Incan King whom the Spanish conquistadores garroted in 1533. Tupac Amaru (which means "Royal Serpent" in Quechua) resisted his uncle's executioners for years, but was finally captured in 1572, whereupon he was paraded on a mule through the streets of Cuzco and beheaded with a cutlass. Two centuries later, his name was appropriated by another Incan rebel who, after his own arrest, was torn apart by four horses in Cuzco.

From its first attack in 1982, the group has leaned toward urban terrorism, much of it aimed at the U.S. It hurled a rocket-propelled ambassador's residence and bombed several Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in Lima. Those acts initially imbued the guerillas with an aura somewhere between Robin Hood mystique and radical chic. In 1990 the group staged its most spectacular stunt when nearly 50 members tunneled out of the Canto Grande prison near Lima, supposedly the nation's most secure jail. The crowning indignity was that the operation was videotaped by the escapees, who included Victory Polay, Tupac Amaru's top leader at the time.



Police snipers peer into the Japanese Embassy in Lima.

Two years later, Fujimori seized near dictatorial powers in a "self-coup" that savaged virtually every democratic institution in the country. but enabled him to implement draconian security measures that eventually crippled both rebel movements. By 1993 Abymael Guzman, the Shining Path warlord whose face had not been seen in 25 years, was in jail and Polay had been recaptured. An elated Fujimori boasted to a Chilean reporter that "no one here in Peru any longer doubts that (Tupac Amaru) will be defeated this year."

Now, through a well-planned operation designed to catapult itself into the international spotlight, Tupac Amaru has upstaged the president. Even if its bid does not succeed, the group will bask in exposure for as long as the crisis lasts. And by last weekend it looked as if that may be a prolonged period. When the initial fireworks subsided, a more grinding routine ensued as an exhausted Red Cross mediator shuffled between embassy and presidential palace, conveying requests for toothbrushes and toilet paper. Batches of hostages were released, but the impasse remained unbroken. Meanwhile, the Peruvian government withdrew behind an official wall of silence, and Fujimori wrestled with conflicting advice from his two most important allies: Japan pressed for negotiation, and the U.S. counseled him not to cut any deals. A team of Delta Force commandos, who specialize in hostage rescues, was on standby in Lima.

As for the hostages, the task before them was perhaps best expressed by Etsuko Taguchi, 59, who attended the ill-fated reception with her husband Yoshimoto, 57. Etsuko was released on Wednesday night, but Yoshimoto remained. On a pack of stomach tablets she handed to Red Cross workers who were acting as go-between, she attached a note in which she wrote a singe Japanese word—"ganbatte." It means "hang in there."

(Courtesy of *Time* special double issue, Dec. 30, 1996 – Jan. 6, 1997)

Notorious East German Master Spy Goes on Trial

DUSSELDORF, United Germany - Markus Wolf, who ran thousands of agents in the West as East German spy chief, went on trial Tuesday in united Germany's second attempt to put the aging Cold War icon behind bars.

Since the nation's highest appeals court threw out his treason conviction in 1995, Wolf has been newly charged with kidnapping, coercion and causing bodily harm in three shadowy operations his agents allegedly carried out between 1955 and 1962.

Once known as "the man without a face" for outfoxing his Western foes, Wolf has avoided jail since German unification in 1990. He says he is a victim of "victors' justice."

In an interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine, Wolf said he would testify in his own defense because prosecutors were trying "to put me on a level with common criminals" in a quest for "revenge and retribution."

"I am defending my honor and that of my employees," he was quoted as saying. "There's nothing to the charges."

Wolf, 73, is being tried by the same Duesseldorf court that sentenced him to six years in prison for treason and bribery in 1993.

The appeals court overturned that verdict and ordered a retrial after the federal constitutional court ruled in May 1995 that East German spy leaders who worked in their communist homeland cannot be tried for treason because they did not betray their country.

On the first day of wolf's new trial, prosecutors dropped treason from the original 34 charges against him, as they were expected to do.

(AP)

China and Taiwan Tangle Anew Over Stopover, Dalai Lama

BEIJING - China's dispute with Taiwan flared anew Tuesday, with Beijing complaining about a planned U.S. stopover by Taiwan's premier and warning Taiwan to be careful about letting the Dalai Lama visit.

Premier Lien Chan left Taipei for Los Angeles en route to Managua to attend the Nicaraguan president's inauguration, and Taiwan's Foreign Ministry promised he wouldn't make any surprise sidetrips that might annoy China.

But China views Taiwan as a renegade province and frowns on all travel abroad by Taiwanese leaders, while Taiwan is always alert for ways to punch holes in China's diplomatic blockade.

The U.S. State Department's decision to let Lien stop in Los Angeles and New York—briefly, unofficially and without meeting any U.S. representatives—drew an objection from Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang.

At a regular news conference, Shen warned that such visas could harm U.S.-China relations and should not be used to promote Taiwan's independence.

Washington's decision to allow Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui to attend his college reunion at Cornell University in June 1995 severely strained U.S.-Chinese relations. Tensions have eased only in recent months.

Taiwan's official central news agency said the United States agreed to Lien returning via New York only after he cut his planned stay there from two days to one to minimize protests from China.

Lien won't visit any other countries, Taiwanese Foreign Minister John Chang told reporters, denying published reports.

In August, Lien vanished while transiting through New York, and resurfaced two days later in Ukraine, which has ties with diplomatic rival China.

This time, Lien will fly from New York to an unidentified "powerful" European country, Taiwan's *United Evening News* said, quoting a high government source.

China insists that countries with which it has ties should not receive Taiwanese officials.

Shen also voiced disapproval over Taipei newspaper reports that the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, will be allowed to visit.

The Dalai Lama is revered by the island's 5 million Buddhist faithful.

"I just want to remind the Taiwan authorities the Dalai Lama is not a religious figure," Shen said. He reiterated Beijing's contention that the Dalai Lama uses religion to cloak attempts to split Tibet away from China.

"We hope the taiwan authorities handle this issue with caution," he said.

In Taiwan, Chang King-yuh, chairman of the mainland Affairs Council, said the Dalai Lama was invited to visit his buddhist followers, and China should not link this to politics. (AP)

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Russian Woman Bitten by New Year's Gift

MOSCOW – A Russian woman had a leg amputated after the dog she received as a New Year's gift bit her down to the bone, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

The incident occurred in the Kazan region on the banks of the Volga River.

The 60-year-old woman had just received the rottweiler from her son on New Year's Day, a traditional day of gift-giving in Russia, when she and her son sat down to have dinner. (AFP)

Underground Train Kills Woman, but Driver Unaware

LONDON – A train killed an elderly woman in a London underground station, but the driver did not notice the accident, the evening Standard newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The victim slipped between the train and the platform on January 1 in Eastcote station, northeastern London, which was almost deserted at the time.

The woman was killed as the train left the station, the newspaper said, but the accident was only noticed by the driver of a train which arrived in the station a few minutes later. (AFP)

Serbia's Opposition to Jam Phones and Roads



BELGRADE, Serbia, Yugoslavia (Jan. 7): Serbian opposition leader Vuk Draskovic (C) gestures as he tries to make his way through a line of riot police as tens of thousands of protesters try to march through the streets of Belgrade. Riot police rumbled into the city's center to monitor a rally of around 30,000 opposition supporters tightening the screw on embattled Serbian President Milosevic. The protest march ended without clashes.

(AFP PHOTO)

BELGRADE – Serbia's opposition launched a new tactic Wednesday in its movement against President Slobodan Milosevic, urging its supporters to jam government phone lines while calling for a fresh traffic protest in Belgrade.

The independent daily *Demokratia* published a full-page appeal by the Together Opposition Coalition, which has led a seven-week movement against the government, listing the numbers to call.

Telephone lines can be jammed simply by calling numbers and then leaving the phones off the hook. Milosevic's number was listed, as were those of Federal Yugoslav President Zoran Lilic, all government ministries, the Supreme Court and ruling coalition parties.

"Be persistent, and from dawn until dusk, call regime institutions ... to stop them from causing more damage," the appeal, in the form of an advertisement, said. "The action is starting immediately. "

Most of the numbers were still reachable by mid-morning, however.

The opposition, which has protested for 50 consecutive days on the streets of Belgrade against the government's move to annul opposition wins in local elections, has threatened to step up its action if Milosevic does not back down this week.

Opposition leader Vuk Draskovic has called for new traffic jams in downtown Belgrade on Wednesday in a repeat of a protest on Sunday which reduced the Serbian capital to Gridlock. The colourful car protest was introduced to circumvent a ban on marches in force since December 25.

Students for their part have threatened to face off with riot police enforcing the ban to force them to withdraw.

On Tuesday, as some 30,000 opposition supporters defied the ban and rallied in central Belgrade, hundreds of riot police rumbled into the city centre in a show of force which further increased tensions in Belgrade. (AFP)

Another Religious Party Boycotts Pakistan Elections

KARACHI – A Pakistani religious party, Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan (JUP). Wednesday joined a boycott of the February 3 elections citing the interim government's inability to purge corrupt politicians.

JUP chief Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani announced the boycott, slamming the "failure" of the caretakers to implement an accountablity process to punish corruption and bar wrong-doers from the electoral arena.

"The process has not been geared up and this has led to disappointment among the people and they have lost confidence in the elections," Noorani told reporters at his home here.

The JUP announcement followed a boycott of the election on similar grounds by the main Muslim party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, and a minor political group, Tehrik-e-Istiqlal.

Noorani said his party would however not oppose the holding of the polls or demand their postponement.

The JI, after its boycott decision late last month, has been organizing sit-in demonstrations to press its demand that the accountability process be completed before holding elections.

Noorani said the JUP would not create any hurdle in the way of elections, adding that "We belive disillusioned people would not vote. "

"We cannot participate in the elections when faces coming to the fore are the same which were seen in the last four elections, in the last four assemblies which were dissolved," he said.

"If accountability process is not accomplished peacefully, the country may witness a bloody revoloution. We pray to God that that day should not come," he said. (AFP)

Major Vows to Inject 'Pragmatism' Into EU Reform Talks

THE HAGUE, Netherlands -- British Prime Minister John Major vowed Tuesday to inject 'pragmatism' into the stalled debate on European Union reforms in which he refuses to back the changes sought by his partners.

"There is no question of Britain leaving the European Union," Major declared.

But he said his Conservative government - torn over European integration and facing elections that polls say it will lose - will continue to make a case for moderate reforms.

Major met with Dutch Premier Wim Kok whose country assumed the EU presidency Jan. 1 and must complete by mid-June a reform package to enable the EU to take in new members without choking on its own bureaucracy.

Both leaders said a deal was possible on letting some EU nations move to further integration without others being able to block them.

That will enshrine into the EU treaty the notion of a "two-speed Europe" in which some EU members integrate faster than others.

Major said a more flexible EU was needed if the union is to almost double its ranks in the years ahead.

But other differences remained. (AP)

Tigers Kill Five Troops in Bunker Attack

COLOMBO – Tamil Tiger guerrillas stormed an army bunker in northern Sri Lanka, killing five security personel and wounding another 15, the Defense Ministry said Wednesday.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) gunmen attacked the defense line in Vavuniya district on Tuesday as the army kept up an operation against the rebels in the east of the country.

The Defense Ministry said there were casualties among the Tiger attackers but gave no details.

The army is conducting a search-and-destroy mission against the LTTE in the coastal district of Batticaloa, officials said.

The LTTE is leading a drawn out campaign for independence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

More than 50,000 people have been killed in fighting in the past 24 years. (AFP)

Deposed Bangladeshi President to Be Freed From Jail

DHAKA -- Deposed Bangladesh President Hussain Muhammad Ershad is to be freed from jail after being granted bail by the Supreme Court, officials said Wednesday.

The ex-president, who has been serving a 13-year jail term for corruption since being overthrown in 1990, could be released on Wednesday or Thursday, officials said.

The Supreme Court granted Ershad bail in the last of 19 graft and criminal cases against him, involving the $15.23 million purchase of defense radars in 1986.

Ershad, 66, seized power in a 1982 bloodless coup and was deposed by a 1990 massive pro-democracy campaign.

During his strongarm rule, a number of journalists and opposition politicians were jailed. His governments also banned some local publications and specific issues of international magazines that criticized him.

Around 100 deaths during his tenure were said to have political links.

One of Ershad's attorneys told AFP he could not confirm the release time as "there are cumbersome court procedures to finish first."

Communications Minister Anwar Hossain, who is secretary general of Ershad's Jatiya Party, visited Ershad on Wednesday in the special house where he is now kept in detention, but refused to make any comment. (AFP)

Oil Slick Fouls Japan's Rocky Northwestern Shore

TOKYO – Waves of oil, along with a piece of the Russian tanker that spilled it, washed ashore on Japan's rocky northwestern shoreline Tuesday, fouling the coast and threatening fish and wildlife.

Stormy seas thwarted cleanup ships as the 3,700-kiloliter (962,000-gallon) spill started surging on to a 5-kilometer (3 mile) jagged stretch of coast near Mikuni, about 180 kilometers (110 miles) northwest of Tokyo.

Fishermen and local officials feared the spill would ruin the seaweed, abalone and shellfish cultivated in the area.

TV footage showed sludge-crested waves breaking on the shore and gobs of oil dripping off of coastline rocks and mixing in the surf.

An oil-smudged bird hopped on the wind-swept beach.

"It looks pretty bad," said Shinji Sato, spokesman for the Maritime Safety Agency. He said officials were still trying to gauge the damage to coastal fisheries.

The drifting front part of the wrecked ship, the 13,157-ton Nakhodka, ran aground one kilometer (a half-mile) east of Mikuni. (AP)







MIKUNI, Japan (Jan. 8): A Japanese coastguard helicopter sprays chemicals to neutralize heavy oil flowing out of a section of the stranded Russian oil tanker, "Nakhodka" off the shore of Mikuni, Fukui prefecture. Oil from the tanker reached the coast, threathening local marine life and a popular scenic spot.

(AFP PHOTO)

Turkish Cargo Ship Sinks, Leaving Four Dead

PALERMO, Sicily – A Turkish cargo ship sunk in rough waters Wednesday between Sardinia and Sicily, leaving at least four crew members dead, Palermo Port officials said. One crewman was missing.

One crewman injured and the other five members of the Onur-K, which was carrying a load of zinc from Sardinia to Sicily, were rescued by an Italian vessel in the vicinity, authorities said.

The tragedy occurred roughly midway between Italy's two biggest islands. (AP)

Influential South Korean Hyundai Union Eases Strike

SEOUL — The influential umbrella union of the powerful South Korean Hyundai Group said it had eased its strike and that some of its members would return to work on Wednesday.

"All our unions have decided to ease full strikes until January 14, the deadline set by Kwon Young-Kil," a union leader told AFP by phone from the southern port city of Ulsan.

The announcement appeared to be the first crack in the 14-day-long nationwide strikes called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KFTU) to protest an unpopular new labor law. Kwon Young-Kil is the federation head.

The Hyundai alliance of unions has traditionally spearheaded labor protests in South Korea and claims membership of 89,000 nationwide at 21 companies.

"About 80,000 of our members have been striking at 15 plants nationwide," the spokesman said, adding that the timetable for the partial return would be decided by each individual union.

"Some will remain on full strike, but most will arrange shift work groups. We need time to recharge out batteries for stronger action after the 14th," he said. (AFP)

U.S. Advisory Panel Highlights Deep Fissures in Social Security Debate

WASHINGTON — The future of the U.S. social security system, the federal program ensuring worker retirement benefits, remained uncertain after an advisory panel failed to agree on a single course of action.

The panel's massive and complex report, issued Monday following a 2-1/2 year study, meant that the Clinton administration and Congress were unlikely to take decisive measures soon to guarantee the viability of the system in the 21st century.

"I wouldn't hold my breath on legislative action this year," said Robert Reischauer, former director of the Congressional Budget Office.

The 13-member panel appointed by Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala in 1994 agreed that some social security funds should be invested in stocks and other securities to earn higher returns.

But the group split into three camps on the question of who would oversee the investments.

"Basically it's the first step," said Michael Metz, chief market strategist at Oppenheimer.

"I don't see anything else materializing for at least a year. In the end I'm very skeptical that social security money will be allowed to flow into the stock market."

"There's a lot of opposition to it, which is justified in my opinion because this is money earmarked for savings, not investment, and you have to make a distinction." But another analyst, Roseanne Cahn of CS First Boston, said it was "particularly encouraging" that all three options pointed to Wall Street as a means of earning a better return on pension money and closing the U.S. savings deficit.

"It's a problem that obviously needs to be solved and I can't imagine what else they (the administration and Congress) are going to do."

Under one option put forward by the panel, about 40 percent of social security assets would be invested in stock funds in a program overseen by an investment board appointed by the president.

A second option would create individual accounts into which workers would place about 80 percent of their current social security payroll tax. The funds, which would be held and managed by workers rather than the government, would then be invested in stocks and other instruments.

Under a third option, individual accounts would also be created from social security payroll taxes and the funds invested. While the government would hold the accounts, workers would have a measure of freedom in determining where the money would be placed.

The U.S. Labor Movement is expected to oppose the second and third options — which would introduce a degree of privatization into the system — on grounds that such an approach would benefit Wall Street brokers while putting workers at risk.

While an influx of social security money into stocks could indeed prove to be a dramatic boon to Wall Street, it could also trigger a bitter debate between organizard labor and the investment community.

According to the David Langar Company, an actuarial firm cited by the *Washington Post*, more than $4 trillion a year could be injected into the stock market by 2010.

Social security for retired workers, financed by a payroll tax shared equally by employers and employees, was established in 1935 as part of the new deal offered Americans by President Franklin Roosevelt.

The program is today the largest government entitlement cost, accounting for 42 percent of all mandatory federal spending.

For the moment, the system takes in $60 billion more than it pays out each year.

But the crunch will come when the 74-milliion-strong baby boom generation, whose members were born just after World War II and who are now in their 50s, starts to retire.

According to some projections the sequeeze could come as early as 2012, with the system on the verge of collapse by 2029 or 2030.

(AFP)

China Eastern Airlines to Offer 1.4 Billion Foreign Shares

HONG-KONG — China Eastern Airlines Ltd. will offer to sell 1.4 billion shares in a dual offering planned for New York and Hong Kong, a source close to the underwriters said Wednesday.

The offer will be priced in line with other airlines but actual pricing is expected to be set after underwriters test the waters of investor interest, the source told AFX-Asia, an AFP affiliate financial newswire, said.

The net profit of China Eastern Airlines, one of China's most profitable carriers, is forecast at 70 million U.S. dollars for 1996, 82 million dollars for 1997 and 98 million dollars for 1998, the source said.

The airline, one of 34 in China, is forecasting a 7.3 percent decline in net profit for 1996 due to competition and the impact of the yen, the source said.

"The road show will start with a road trip for fund managers to shanghai on January 13, the source added.

The Hong Kong initial public offering for China Eastern Airlines will start on January 15 and the deal is expected to close at the end of the month, another source close to the underwiters said.

"Morgan Stanley is testing the waters with regard to pricing right now, but I expect it to be comparable with other airlines," he said.

Last month, China Eastern has placed an order for nine MD-90 planes from U.S. manufacturer McDonnell Douglas, which has announced plans to merge with Boeing.

The 158-seat aircraft would be delivered between next October and 1999. It did not give the value of the order.

China Eastern is expected to have a fleet of 80 passenger and cargo planes by the end of the century.

Another airline, China Southern Airlines, is also reported to be moving toward overseas listing.

(AFP)

Material Wealth Gap Widens Among Urban Chinese

BEIJING — Widening income gaps among urban Chinese are exacerbating disparities in the property holdings of rich and poor families, according to the results of a survey published Wednesday.

Of 1,550 households surveyed in Beijing, those in the top 20 percent income bracket owned 44.8 percent of the total family property, while the bottom 20 percent owned only 5.7 percent.

At the same time, the survey showed that the average property value of the richest urban households was 7.85 times that of the poorest ones.

Managers working for foreign-funded ventures and private companies, contractors of state-owned enterprises and well-known actors were among those boasting the most possessions.

Families with retired or unemployed members to support ranked lowest in terms of individual property.

The average value of such property — of which financial assets comprise 58 percent — was 68,756 yuan per household, said the survey published by the *China Daily.*

Total individual property of all urban families in Beijing topped 164.9 billion yuan.

Surplus cash, socked away in savings accounts, made up 80 percent of the financial assets of Beijing residents, with securities the next most widely held asset.

The survey found that 51. 1 percent of families believed savings accounts were the most dependable investment choice, despite interest rate cuts and the suspension of inflation-adjusted subsidies to depositors by the Central Bank.

(AFP)

S. Korea to Launch Financial Reform Committee Next Week

SEOUL — South Korea will launch a Financial Reform Committee next week to press for mergers among financial institutions within the first half of this year, reports said Wednesday.

"The proposed Financial Reform Committee will be set up at an early date and hold its first meeting, chaired by President Kim Young-Sam, around January 20," a high-ranking presidential official was quoted by newspapers as saying.

The president on Tuesday called for an urgent financial-sector shake-up and ordered the formation of the committee under his direct control.

The new body, comprising some 30 mainly private-sector experts, will first push for mergers among financing firms, credit card companies and others engaged in financial credit in the first half of the year, he said.

It would also broaden the scope of deregulation, designed to improve management of the obsolete financial sector throughout this year, as well as work on interest rate cuts, the official said.

Anlaysts here predicted a sweeping overhaul in the finance industry, aimed at boosting efficiency and synergic effects, in the face of mounting competition from foreign rivals.

South Korea joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in December and pledged to open its industries wider.

Last month, the government amended financial rules to allow banks, insurance firms, securities houses and other financial institutions to cross business lines into other financial industries.

(AFP)

Malaysia's Petronas in Study on Base Oil for Lubricants Manufacture

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's national oil company Petroliam Nasional BHD (Petronas) reached agreement with two parties Wednesday to conduct a feasibility study on producing base oil for lubricants manufacture.

The study will be conducted jointly with its 45-percent-owned refining arm Malaysian Refining Company SDN. BHD (MRC) and the Chinese Petroleum Corp. Of Taiwan, Petronas said in a statement.

U.S-based Conoco Inc. and Norway's oil and gas giant Statoil hold the remaining 55 percent in MRC, which is principally engaged in the construction, management and operation of the second phase of its refinery in Malacca state.

Upon the successful completion of the study, the parties would set up a joint venture company to carry out the lubricant base oil production project in southwestern Malacca.

(AFP)

Asian Stock Markets Close Generally Higher

HONG KONG — Asian stock markets closed generally higher Tuesday, but share prices slumped in Tokyo because of worries over the Japanese economy.

Tokyo's 225-issue Nikkei Stock average plunged 549. 81 points, or 2.83 percent, closing at 18,896. 19. In Monday's half-day session, the first trading of the year, the index had climbed 84.65 points, or 0.44 percent.

Tuesday's close was the Nikkei average's lowest since 18,879.53 on Dec. 5, 1995.

The Tokyo Stock price index of all issues listed on the first section was down 27.81 points, or 1.88 percent, to 1,453.05. It had gained 9.92 points, or 0.67 percent, the previous day.

Investors are worried that Japan's economic recovery may slow substantially after April, when Japan's consumption tax will rise to 5 percent from the current 3 percent and special income-tax cuts granted in the past two years will end.

Meanwhile, the U.S. dollar was quoted at 115.51 yen, down 1.13 yen from late Monday in Tokyo and also below its New York level overnight of 115.68 yen.

In Hong Kong, share prices closed generally lower in heavy trading.

The Hang Seng Index, the Hong Kong market's key indicator of blue chips, fell 23.77 points, or 0.2 percent, closing at 13,420.16. On Monday, the index had surged 221.14 points.

Brokers said the market was hit by selective profit-taking following Monday's sharp gains in share prices.

They said worries about higher U.S. Interest rates also dragged down the index.

Taipei: Share prices closed higher for the second straight day.

The market's key weighted price stock index rose 30.27 points to 6,875.02.

Wellington: New Zealand share prices closed higher, with the index closing above 2,400.00 points for the first time since February 1994 as market players were encouraged by steadily dropping short-term interest rates. The NZSE-40 capital index rose 11.00 points to 2,408.28.

Manila: Share prices closed higher. The Philippines stock exchange index of 34 selected issues rose 9.10 points to 3,195.47.

Sydney: The Australian Share Market closed broadly lower, with the gold sector knocked hardest of all following an overnight drop in the Billion price. The all ordinaries index fell 9.1 points to 2,400.7.

Seoul: Share prices closed lower for the third consecutive session. The Korea composite stock price index fell 15.82 points to 611.05.

Bangkok: Thai share prices closed higher, buoyed by renewed foreign buying. The stock exchange of Thailand index rose 29.88 points to 820.11, its biggest single-day gain since Sept. 30, 1996.

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian share prices closed higher. The key composite index rose 4.38 points to 1,237.50.

Singapore: Share prices closed higher. The benchmark 30-share straits times industrials index rose 0.87 point to 2,246.59.

Jakarta: The stock exchange's composite index rose 6.410 points, closing at 660.367.

(AP)

Dollar Falls, Stocks Close Sharply Lower

TOKYO – Fears that Japanese finance officials may try again to talk down the dollar pushed the U.S. currency lower against the Japanese yen Wednesday. Fears about the economy sent share prices plunging.

In late afternoon, the dollar was trading at 115.33 yen, down 0.18 yen from late Thursday but above its overnight New York level of 115.23 yen. During the day, it ranged between 115.00 yen and 115.58 yen.

"It's better not to buy dollars right now," said Yukio Sakamoto, assistant director of foreign exchange at Bank of Nova Scotia in Tokyo.

On Tuesday, the dollar at one point dropped one yen, to 114.92 yen, after Japanese Finance Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka and Trade Minister Shinji Sato voiced concern over the recent dramatic weakening of the yen.

Before Tuesday's plunge, the dollar had gained more than 3 yen since Dec. 19, hitting 45-month highs.

All day Wednesday, a nervous market was filled with anticipation about Mitsuzuka's late afternoon news conference. Players wary about what he might say were cautious about dollar-buying, traders said.

"But his words were toned-down ones about the stock market. The absence of any dollar talk helped it come back up," Fuji Bank dealer Dai Sato said.

In stock trading, the main Nikkei stock average of 225 selected issues fell 215.81 points, or 1.14 percent, closing at 18,680. 38.

On Tuesday, the Nikkei had shed 549.81 points, or 2.83 percent, to 18,896.19, its lowest closing since dec. 5, 1995.

The Tokyo stock exchange price index of all shares listed on the first section was down 19.77 points, or 1.36 percent, to 1,433.28.

It had fallen 27.81 points, or 1.88 percent, the previous day.

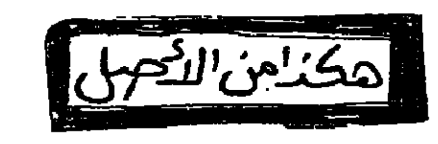
Volume on the first section totaled about 400 million shares, up from 288.4 million Tuesday. Retreats outnumbered advances 950 to 207, with 96 issues unchanged.

Traders say worries about the nation's economy and the lack of any concrete government measures to stimulate it are continuing to weigh on the market.

"The market is disappointed," said Yoshihiko Kuroichi, a researcher at Kankaku securities. "The structural problems are not solved yet."

Stocks also were hurt by futures-related selling and selling by Japanese institutional investors trying to spruce up accounts for the current fiscal year ending March 31, traders said.

(AP)



Britons Back Monarchy in Vote After Huge and Rowdy TV Debate



LONDON -- A majority among 2.5 million television viewers said Tuesday the monarchy should not be abolished, in an event billed as the biggest live television debate ever, but which turned into something of a farce.

A phone poll with the question "do you want a monarchy?" run by the private Carlton television station showed 64 percent of those who responded supported the royal family, with 36 percent against.

Carlton assembled a live -- and often rowdy -- audience of over 3,000 people in a huge studio in the central English city Birmingham for the two-hour debate titled "Monarchy -- the Nation Decides", and the telephone call-in poll was held concurrently.

England and Wales came down on the side of the royals, while Northern Ireland was split equally on the issue and Scotland was very definitely against.

The program alternated between contributions from a panel of personalities to interventions from members of the audience.

But the standard of the debate was severely criticized by many of those leading the discussion, with one walking out half- way through.

Bernard Ingham, former press secretary to Margaret Thatcher, said afterwards that the show was "a disgrace", it was "a sort of pub brawl at times", and that he regretted taking part in it.

And writer Frederick Forsyth -- author of bestselling thrillers such as *"The Day of the Jackal"* -- added: "There was too much rowdyism in the audience; no opportunity to develop an argument.

"Most of the audience were not listening. They came here totally committed and most of them were Republican because they come from inner city areas," he said.

Conservative MP Steven Norris walked out after half-an-hour, and later said the debate was "utterly trivial and patronizing... this was just a bear garden".

But Labor MP Bernie Grant said he thought the show had a lot of merit.

"I see this as an opening gambit in the whole debate. I think there should now be a debate on this in Parliament. It is obviously a topic the nation is quite divided on," he said.

"Tonight has been great fun," he added.

Steve Clark, the program's executive producer, was pleased with the show and said it might be repeated for "such issues as law and order, the health service or Europe".

"Is the standard of debate in the House of Commons that much better?" he asked.

Immediately after the poll result was announced, bookmakers William Hill quoted odds of 50-1 that the monarchy will be abolished within 10 years, 25-1 within 20 years and 10-1 within 50 years.

Meanwhile, according to another AFP report from London, Prince Charles recently acknowledged that he had let down those close to him, including his mother and children, and pledged to make an effort to mend his ways, the *Daily Mirror* has reported.

"Nothing will happen overnight, but from now on Charles will make a sustained effort to work for others, particularly the royal family," the tabloid reported, quoting a close friend of the prince who claimed to speak in his name.

The heir to the throne reportedly told his friend: "I've got a lot of things wrong and I've been doing so for too long.

"I've let down the queen, my family -- including William and Harry," he added, referring to his children. "I've let down the whole institution of the monarchy. I've even failed (ex-wife princess) Diana."

The unidentified friend, who claims he was given the go- ahead by Prince Charles at the weekend to speak with the press, said the prince wants to rework his image to become seen as a "straightforward uncomplicated man who only wants to serve his country in the best possible way."

A possible sign of his new princely manners came when Prince Charles surprised photographers hounding him during his ski vacation in Switzerland by being cooperative for photo shoots and even thanking them for their behavior.

"Thank you for creating an environment and atmosphere in which I could have an enjoyable and peaceful holiday with Prince Harry," the prince was quoted as saying. *(AFP)*

Markus Wolf East German Spymaster Extraordinaire

BERLIN -- Markus Wolf, spymaster extraordinaire, directed one of the most formidable espionage networks of the Cold War for nearly 30 years, infiltrating agents deep into the West German administration with sometimes devastating effect.

A legend in his own lifetime, Wolf ran spies across the Iron Curtain on behalf of the regime in East Berlin. One of his "moles", Guenter Guillaume, was a close adviser to the Social Democrat Chancellor Willy Brandt. The unmasking of Guillaume prompted Brandt to resign.

Wolf even recruited the head of West German counter-espionage, Hans-Joachim Tiedge, as a double agent. His agents numbered as many as 5,000 in West Germany alone, and some may still remain unmasked as of this day.

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These agents were said to be so effective that East German leader Erich Honecker regularly received the weekly intelligence digest of West German espionage before the chancellor did.

Often, they preyed on lonely women secretaries in government offices, luring them through romantic adventures into betraying state secrets.

Wolf, who ran the foreign espionage wing of the Stasi secret police from 1958 to 1986, was reputedly the model for the Machiavellian East German spy chief in John le Carre's novel *"The Spy Who Came in From the Cold"*.

Such was the mystery surrounding him that for 20 years he was known by his counterparts in the West as "the man with no face". All they had to go on was a 1959 picture. Not until a visit to Sweden in 1978 was he positively identified.

Known by the Russian nickname of "Misha", Wolf has charmed many of those who were his sworn enemies. Tall and elegantly dressed, his suave good looks earned him the title of the "Paul Newman of spying" by the West German tabloid press.

He was born Markus Johannes Wolf in 1923 in Hechingen, Baden-Wuerttemberg. His father Friedrich was a well-known Jewish communist writer, and his elder brother Konrad became a famous film director.

Fearing Nazi persecution, the family fled to the Soviet Union in 1934, where they stayed for the next 11 years. He had hoped to study aircraft engineering, but in 1945 was sent by the Communist Party to work in radio in Berlin.

A convinced communist, he was an assiduous servant of the Stalinist East German state founded in 1949, worked in its Moscow Embassy for two years as first counsellor before returning to build up the espionage service.

Known by the Russian nickname of "Misha", Wolf has charmed many of those who were his sworn enemies. Tall and elegantly dressed, his suave good looks earned him the title of the "Paul Newman of spying" by the West German tabloid press.

But by 1987 he had left his post for "personal reasons", and became a public critic of Honecker during the momentous months of 1989.

Wolf backed the pro-Gorbachev moderates who hoped to reform the system without scrapping it.

But on September 30, 1990, three days before reunification went into effect with the extension of federal German law to the east of the country, he used his Soviet passport and rank of Red Army colonel to flee to Moscow.

A West German arrest warrant had already been out for him for 15 months.

In Moscow, he wrote books about his family and life as an exile, one of which, *"The Troika"*, was published in the West to critical acclaim.

He offered his services to the federal German authorities, proposing to help them track down hidden "moles" and solve riddles of the past in exchange for an amnesty. The offer was never taken up, but Wolf eventually returned of his own will to face arrest and trial.

Despite being sentenced in 1993 to six years in prison for high treason, he has always remained free.

He has recently written a book on Russian cuisine and given talks on his spying days. *(AFP)*

China's Justice Ministry Warns Lawyers' Standards Lagging

BEIJING -- China's Justice Ministry has warned that the standards of its lawyers lag well behind those required by the rapidly modernizing nation.

"There is an increasing demand for high-quality personnel well-versed in law, but present measures and requirements lag far behind social needs," Hou Xiandan, deputy director of the Justice Ministry's Legal Education Department, told the *China Daily*.

He said China currently had 100,000 law professionals and 1.2 million legal workers, but warned that the 2.2 percent of university students majoring in law was too low.

Even with the percentage increasing to three percent by 2000, when China will have an estimated 150,000 lawyers, 30,000 public notaries and 200,000 legal service personnel, legal professionals will still be scarce.

"Neither the quantity or quality of such personnel can meet the growing social demand," Huo said.

China's legal system was basically destroyed during late party chairman Mao Zedong's reign, when lawyers and judges were frequently persecuted.

The system was only reinstated after Mao's death, when his successor Deng Xiaoping started radical economic reforms in 1978. *(AFP)*

36 Million U.S. Households to Be Online by 2000

WASHINGTON — The number of U.S. households with access to the Internet will more than double by the year 2000 to 36 million, according to a survey released recently.

Jupiter Communications predicted that personal computers will be in 55 percent of U.S. households within the next three years, most of them with modems.

Others may gain access to the Internet through other information appliances, including television sets, the company said.

In a separate survey, International Sata Corp. predicted the number of World Wide Web users would double to more than 68 million but said 1997 would be a second straight year in which personal computer sales growth would slow.

IDC predicted a 15.5 percent increase in worldwide spending on PCs, down from 20 percent growth in 1996 and 32 percent growth in 1995.

Frank Gens, an IDC senior vice president and chief technology forecaster, said the industry "to survive ... must find new sources of growth, although many will struggle mightily with whether they should, and whether they can, fundamentally reshape themselves to reach new markets."

"With the business market becoming saturated, (industry) leaders will need to explore the uncharted frontier — the mass market," IDC said.

"It's interesting to note three of the five PC companies poised for major share gains — Toshiba, Sharp and Fujitsu — are mass-market-savvy Japanese suppliers launching major expansions in the PC business."

Gens said Intel, the leading chipmaker for PCs, should work with other firms developing Internet appliances or "it will miss the greatest growth opportunities in the decade ahead." *(AFP)*

Monkey Thought Extinct Discovered in Madagascar

HANNOVER, Germany -- German researchers have found a tiny monkey long thought extinct in Madagascar, the Hannover Veterinary School announced here recently.

The monkey, whose Latin name is allocebus trichotis, is one of the smallest of the lemurs, weighing only 80 grams (less than three ounces).

The researchers found the tiny monkey in a remote part of a tropical forest in Madagascar, which boasts 30 of the world's 200 known primate species.

They said the forest needed special protection to prevent the loss of its flora and fauna. *(AFP)*

Asian Publishers Launch Regional Newspaper Awards

HONG KONG -- The first newspaper awards for Asia were launched in Hong Kong Tuesday, in what was described as a move to promote the quality and profile of the region's print media.

Asian Newspaper Focus, a magazine covering the Asian press, announced the scheme at the Asian Newspaper Publishers Expo, a trade convention and seminar here.

Eight prizes will be given out in the Asian newspaper awards, with the first awards ceremony being held at the next expo, a year from now, in Kuala Lumpur, said the magazine's publisher, Andrew Lynch.

The award categories are for:

- Daily Newspaper of the Year: an "overall award for all-round quality and approach"
- Weekly Newspaper of the Year: as above
- Magazine or newspaper supplement of the year
- Marketing campaign of the year
- Best use of color in a newspaper
- Best design of a newspaper
- Best use of photography/graphic design
- "Achievement of the Year": a special judges' award to reward "initiative and innovation."

"There are currently no awards that recognize the outstanding achievements of the Asian newspaper industry," Lynch said in a faxed statement.

"(...) We hope to reward the hard work, initiative and outstanding quality that have hitherto gone unrecognized within the business."

Asian Newspaper Focus, which is distributed free to media executives around Asia, is co-sponsor of the scheme along with suppliers in the industry. *(AFP)*

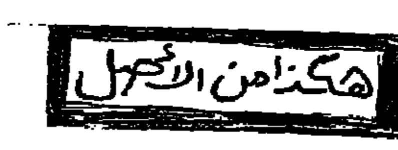
Beijing Restaurants Fined for Deadly Fare

BEIJING -- Two Japanese-run restaurants in Beijing have each been fined 10,000 yuan ($1,205) for serving blowfish -- a much favored but highly poisonous delicacy, the *China Daily* said Wednesday.

The Beijing Health Bureau also ordered the two eateries to destroy about 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of blowfish they had in stock.

The deadly blowfish is considered a great delicacy in Japan, where chefs must undergo lengthy special training to prepare the fish so that it can be consumed safely.

Despite the precautions, the odd death from poisoning is still reported. *(AFP)*





Why You Need a Flu Shot

PART 2

What if I'm a woman and pregnant? If you have medical conditions that might increase your risk of flu complications, you should certainly be vaccinated. If possible, do so after the first six months of pregnancy. However, if you're at high risk and will still be in the first or second trimester when flu season begins, don't wait to get the shot. Although physicians try to avoid administering any medications to pregnant women, the vaccine poses no known risk to a fetus.

How effective is the vaccine? It generally works 70 to 90 percent of the time, and is most effective in younger people. However, immunity lasts only about a year, which is why you need to be inoculated annually, even if the flu viruses don't change much from one year to the next.

Can I get a reaction from the vaccine? It is biologically impossible to get the flu from the vaccine because the viruses in the vaccine are dead and thereby incapable of invading and reproducing in your cells. All they can do is rev up your body's immune system and prompt it to produce antibodies to knock out the live flu viruses.

Occasionally, this revving-up may produce a flu-like reaction. But that means you're probably hypersensitive to a vaccine component.

If you were unprotected and contracted the flu from a live virus, you would undoubtedly become very sick. It's much better to have a brief flu-like vaccine reaction than full-blown flu.

Should I expect side effects? The most common reaction is a minor redness and soreness at the vaccination site. This goes away in a day or two.

When should I get the shot? Unlike colds, which can plague us year-round, flu is decidedly a winter phenomenon. The flu season typically begins in November or December and peters out by March or April.

Schedule your vaccination between October 15 and November 15. Waiting until the flu hits your community is not a good idea because it usually takes about two weeks after you've received the vaccine for your body to build up an immunity to the virus. Still, if an outbreak is already under way, public-health officials advise that high-risk individuals who missed the shot get it anyway.

Where can I get the shot? The vaccine is offered for a minimal fee by many public-health clinics and health-maintenance organizations, and it is increasingly offered free to employees of large companies. Private physicians offer the shot too. Charges are fully reimbursable for Medicare patients.

What else can I do to avoid the flu? If you are among those who didn't get the shot before the flu hit your community or who shouldn't be immunized, you can take either of two antiviral drugs: amantadine hydrochloride or rimantadine hydrochloride. Both prevent infection from type-A flu only.

The prescription medications, which keep the virus from multiplying in the body, are about 70 to 90 percent effective. However, they must be taken within 48 hours of illness onset, and then daily for the duration of flu activity in the community. Unlike the vaccine, they have no lasting effect. In addition to their preventive value, the drugs may shorten the course of a type-A flu attack among those who should have been vaccinated but weren't.

Do the drugs have side effects? Some, but they occur more frequently in people over 65. Typical reactions from amantadine and rimantadine involve the central nervous system, and can include nervousness, anxiety, difficulty concentrating and lightheadedness. There may also be gastrointestinal side effects, such as nausea and diminished appetite. Fortunately these are usually mild and can diminish or disappear while you're still taking the medication.

Having the flu is no fun, and chances are you can't afford to be laid low for a week or more and debilitated for weeks longer. You'd be wise, then, to get the vaccine this year — and every year.

(Courtesy Reader's Digest)

Bojnourd Man Resists Extremes of Temperatures



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- A man who lives in Bojnourd has been found to be resistant to exptremes of weather temperatures, *Iran* morning daily reported Wednesday.

He has a body system that cannot sense extreme cold or heat. In winter, he lies on snow when the temperature is below zero and in summer sunbathes when it is over 50 degrees centigrade.

Asked to comment on his body's unique system, he says: "I have the ability to lie two straight hours in the snow without feeling cold."

Mohammad Ali Masoumi, 67, is a farmer and has the exceptional ability to recognize weather changes on slightest notice where other people would need a change of clothes to notice the change.

Talking to a reporter, he is dressed in thin summer clothes at a time when the temperature is 7 degrees below zero. "I discovered my peculiarity when I was ten," he says further. He says he can even control his body's temperature when it is too hot.

"Last year I went on a pilgrimage and prayed to God comfortably under the simmering heat of 50 degrees," Masoumi adds.

Physicians believe he is among the very few in the world who have adapted to extreme weather temperatures after having been exposed to such conditions for long periods of time.

Masoumi, however, explains it this way: "I inherited this from my grandfather and now my son is inheriting it from me."

THOUGHT

Imam Sadiq (AS) quoted Jesus, as having said: "Regarding the fright which you do not know when you will encounter [i.e. death], what prevents you from preparing for it before it comes upon you suddenly?"

(Bahar, Vol. 14, P. 220)

PRAYER

Noon 12:11
Evening 17:30
Dawn (tomorrow) 05:37
Sunrise (tomorrow) 07:15

Report: Rise in Asthma May Be Linked to Decline in Other Diseases

WASHINGTON — The steady increase in asthma prevalence in developed countries may be linked to a decline in other respiratory infections, according to a study published in the latest issue of *Science* magazine.

Noting that the number of asthma cases in the United States has doubled over the past 20 years, the report links the increase in allergies that cause asthma, hay fever and eczema to immunization of children against tuberculosis, measles and whooping cough.

The report notes that asthma cases tend to rise at the same time that infectious diseases decline in countries that have improved their living standards and immunization programs.

The main author of the study, T. Shirakawa, of Churchill Hospital in Oxford, Britain, believes vaccination against these respiratory diseases prevents children from developing an immune system that would protect them against asthma.

Shirakawa and his team examined a group of 867 Japanese children who had received regular tb immunization at three months, six years and 12 years. None of the children came down with tb but those who responded most vigorously to the vaccine were most likely to develop asthma.

(AFP)



SCRABBLE BRAND GRAMS

RACK 1: L B G E O O T
RACK 2: V C E O O X N (4th Letter Double)
RACK 3: W L S L H A O
RACK 4: D A A U E L F (Triple Word Score)

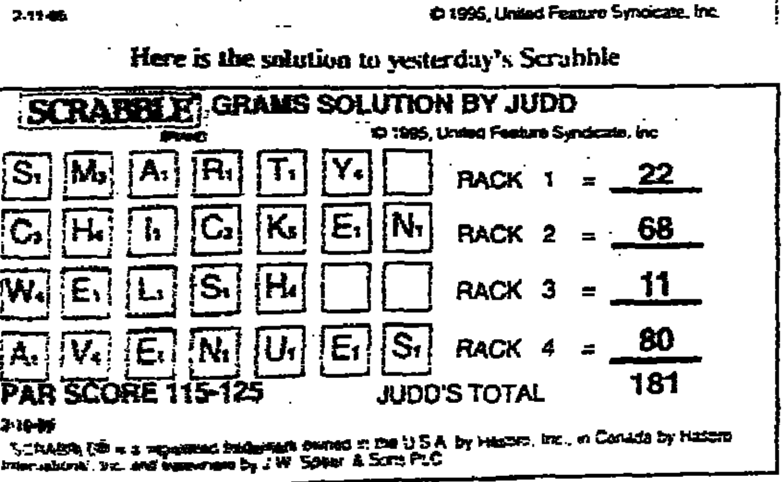
PAR SCORE 110-120

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

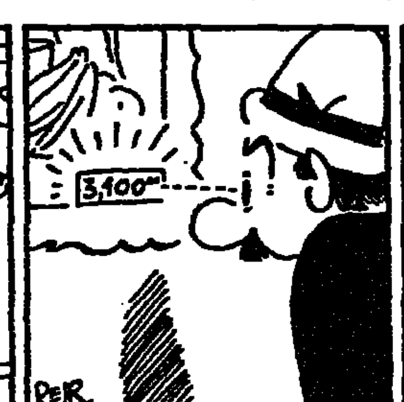
DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7- letter word from the letters in each row. To total points of your words, use scoring directions to right of each row. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words can be found in OSW Official Scrabble Words (Chambers). JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

Here is the solution to yesterday's Scrabble

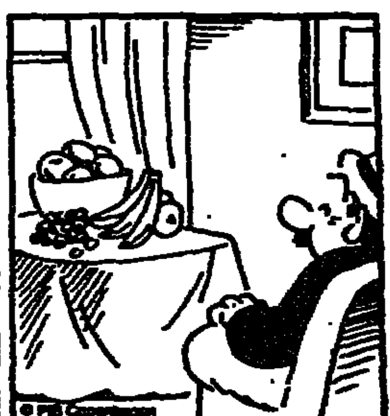

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD

S M A R T Y	RACK 1 = 22
C H I C K E N	RACK 2 = 68
W E L S H	RACK 3 = 11
A V E N U E S	RACK 4 = 80
PAR SCORE 115-125	JUDD'S TOTAL 181







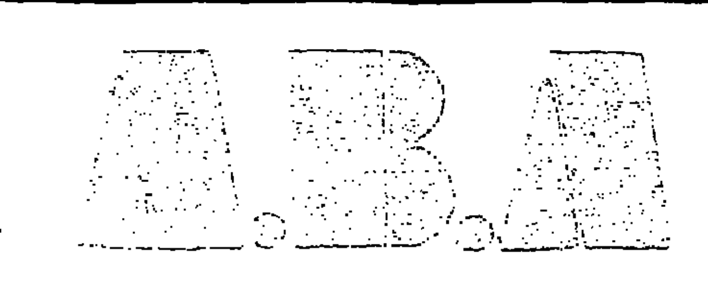


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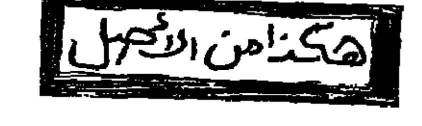
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Labour Poll Lead Holds Up as British Election Approaches

LONDON — The opposition Labour Party remains firmly on course for a comfortable victory at the upcoming general election, according to a new poll, although its support has dropped from last month.

The first ICM poll of the year for the *Guardian* newspaper gives Labour a 17-point lead over Prime Minister John Major's Conservatives.

Adjusted figures put Tony Blair's Labour Party on 48 percent, down two points on December, the Tories on 31 percent, unchanged from last month, and the liberal democrats up one point, to 16 percent.

However, the Tories can take some comfort from the survey's finding that they have cut Labour's lead on economic policy — one of the three key election battlegrounds identified by the prime minister on Tuesday — to three points.

When voters were asked which party had the best economic policy, 32 percent said Labour, down two points, and 29 percent said Conservatives, up four points.

(AFP)

Denials After Former French Troops Said to Recruit Mercenaries

PARIS — Former French soldiers were reported to be recruiting mercenaries for Zairean government forces fighting mainly Tutsi rebels in the east of the country but the two men cited in the report denied this.

The *Le Monde* daily said the group, including the former head of security for late French President Francois Mitterrand, was already some 200-300 strong, and more would join in the following weeks.

It said the mercenaries came from Europe — including Belgium, Britain and France — as well as Angola, Mozambique and South Africa.

The French Defense Ministry immediately denied any official involvement by France in the affair.

"Even if some were former French soldiers, of course we would have no control over them, and one could in no way infer that there is a link with French policy in the region," a spokesman said.

Le Monde said Alain le Caro, ex-head of the GSPR presidential security cell, and another former gendarme linked to it, were recruiting mercenaries to help Kinshasa oust rebels who have occupied eastern Zaire since the end of October.

But Le Caro, who is currently in a military hospital in Paris, formally denied "taking part in any recruitment of mercenaries and all direct or indirect contact with Zairean authorities," in a statement to AFP late Tuesday.

Le Caro said he arrived in Paris on December 21 for a series of medical tests.

He also denied heading "any kind of security firm," but added that he was under contract for the governments of Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast.

On Monday, Paris was forced to deny claims by rebel head laurent-desire Kabila that French troops were seen in the northeastern town of Kisangani.

Kabila said 1,000 French soldiers as well as South African and Angolan mercenaries were currently in Kisangani, a strategic town that would be a key base for the counter-offensive promised by Zaire.

The *Le Monde* report said around 10 former French soldiers were already in place in the region, along with the 200-300 soldiers dubbed the "White Legion" by their members, to train Kinshasa's forces.

"Their numbers are due to increase in coming days," the report added.

It said the mercenaries were recruited from various networks, including one used by Bob Denard, the notorious French former mercenary who staged a failed coup in the Comoros islands in September 1995.

Others were hired with the help of a South African company, executive outcomes, which *Le Monde* quoted denying all involvement.

The report said the firm ostensibly deals in "industrial security."

Kabila, speaking to AFP on Monday, also named executive outcomes as a source of mercenaries in Watsa, near Kisangani, and said there were some 2,000 mercenaries from the former Angolan rebel movement UNITA.

Le Monde said its report was based on people who had worked with the former French soldiers in the past.

The mercenaries were recruited to train the Zairean armed forces, which declared last week that they were ready for a "lightning" counter-offensive against the rebels.

As well as Le Caro, reportedly now a security advisor to Ivory Coast President Konan Bedie, *Le Monde* named Robert Montoya, a former gendarme also involved in the Elysee's antiterrorist cell, as a key figure in the affair.

It said Montoya was responsible for liaising with executive outcomes.

But Montoya's lawyer Francis Szpiner said in a statement issued late Tuesday his client "totally denies reports published by *Le Monde*."

Szpiner said Montoya "heads a company based in Lome, named SAS (Societe Africaine de Securite), but added that he had "never been to Zaire, was not involved with any South African security company and had played no role, directly or indirectly, in the recruitment and training of mercenaries on behalf of the Zairean government."

The French Foreign Ministry said it was "not aware of the presence of mercenaries in the region" and "anyway, if the information were confirmed, it would have nothing to do with French policy in the region."

(AFP)

Arafat, Peres, Castro to Gather for Mitterrand Colloquium



MITTERRAND



CASTRO



PERES



ARAFAT

PARIS — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and former Israeli Premier Shimon Peres are among leaders due to gather in Paris this week for a colloquium marking the anniversary of Francois Mitterrand's death.

Cuban President Fidel Castro is also scheduled to appear at the conference Thursday and Friday at UNESCO headquarters, although his attendance has not been officially confirmed.

Entitled "Francois Mitterrand, Peace and Development: Testimonies Paix," the colloquium aims to remember the former French president by discussing his influence on the international scene during his 14 years in power.

The socialist former head of state died on January 8 last year, eight months after leaving office.

Participants are also scheduled to include former European Commission President Jacques Delors, former UN Head Boutros Boutros-Ghali, outgoing Bulgarian President Zhelju Zhelev and Kazhakstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

UNESCO Deputy Director General Daniel Janicot said the aim of the colloquium was "to offer testimonies through personal memories."

(AFP)

Ghana's Rawlings Sworn in for Second Presidential Term

ACCRA — Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings was sworn in to a second legitimate term of office in Accra in front of 65,000 people including Nigerian Head of State General Sani Abacha and U.S. nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Rawlings, dressed in a traditional Kente robe, swore the presidential oath just after 5:00 pm (1700 GMT) to the cheers of the crowd gathered in the capital's Black Star Square.

Abacha, a guest of honor, used the occasion to lash out at critics of his own regime in an 11-minute speech.

"The peaceful manner in which the Ghanaian elections were held was contrary to some misrepresentations by some external critics. It also shows that Africa does not need external pressure to ensure democracy," said Abacha.

Other VIPs attending the ceremony included the U.S. leader of the nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan and Sierra Leonean former junta leader Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio.

Also present were high level delegations from Benin, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Niger.

Rawlings, 49, who won the December poll with 57.2 percent of the vote, first came to power in Ghana in a military coup in 1979.

Later that year he ceded to a civilian regime but toppled it on the last day of 1981, setting up a junta that ruled until 1992.

Rawlings won a presidential poll that year and his National Democratic Congress later swept legislative polls boycotted by the opposition.

(AFP)

Ukraine Reaffirms Intention to House Peacekeeping Drill

MOSCOW — Ukraine has reaffirmed its intention to hold a peacekeeping drill in accordance with the NATO partnership for peace program, ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Sources at the Carpathian military district staff had confirmed that a military drill, dubbed "cooperative neighbor 97", will be held in June-July 1997, the agency said.

Before the New Year, NATO experts from several countries including the U.S., Italy and Greece went scouting for locations at the military training grounds near Yavorova, in western Ukraine.

About 500 Ukrainian soldiers and an equal number of servicemen from NATO countries will take part in the drill designed to train cargo convoys to deal with water obstacles and work with refugees.

Last year soldiers from 10 countries including a Russian motorized unit participated in "peace shield 96", 10-day multinational peacekeeping exercises. Many former Soviet satellite countries and some ex-Soviet republics have expressed interest in joining NATO, but Russia is opposed to any expansion of the alliance.

(AFP)

Central African Republic Talks to Resume

BANGUI — A French-sponsored bid by African mediators to end an eight-week-old rebellion by soldiers in the Central African Republic, was due to resume here on Wednesday four days after a French military offensive against the mutineers.

However the rebels have said they will not participate unless prisoners captured when French troops attacked rebel positions are released and searches of private homes are called off. The prisoners captured by the French have been handed over to the Central African authorities.

The rebels who have called for the resignation of President Ange-Felix Patasse, seized control of two suburbs of the capital on November 15 in what was the third army mutiny against Patasse within a year.

A truce was signed on December 8 with the help of the heads of state of Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and Gabon who left behind them a West African monitoring committee charged with seeing that both sides respected the truce.

The committee is led by Malian General Amadou Toumani Toure, Alias Att who is widely appreciated in West Africa for having handed over power peacefully after a successful transition to democracy in his homeland.

Toure revived the mediation bid on Tuesday after a meeting in Libreville with Gabonese leader Omar Bongo.

He returned to Bangui accompanied by Gabonese Defense Minister Idriss Ngari and went straight into talks with Patasse then with Prime Minister Jean-Paul Ngoupande and opposition leader Abel Goumba.

However he was unable to meet rebel leader Anicet Saulet. Reliable sources said French troops had intervened to stop Saulet leaving his stronghold with his own escort after he had refused to accept French protection.

French troops are on duty at all strategic points in Bangui, effectively taking charge of the organizational side of the mediation talks.

It was while French troops were escorting two officers from Chad and Burkina Faso to a meeting with the rebels on Saturday that two French soldiers were shot dead after getting back into their car.

France accused the rebels of murdering the two men.

(AFP)

Singapore Income, Education Levels Up, but Society Is Fast Greying

SINGAPORE — Singaporeans' income levels and educational qualifications have improved markedly since the start of the decade, but the society is aging quickly, according to statistics published Wednesday.

A 1995 census by the Department of Statistics showed that the median age of Singaporeans that year was 32.2 years, up from 29.8 in 1990. Ten percent of the population was aged 60 years or more in 1995, from 9.1 percent in 1990.

The average monthly income stood at S$1,633 ($1,166) in 1995, up 63 percent from 1990. Almost a quarter of the workforce earned at least $3,000 a month, up from 9.3 percent in 1990.

"After taking into account the change in the consumer price index of about 13.5 percent between 1990 and 1995, the average growth in real monthly income was 7.6 percent per annum," the department said in its census report.

The survey covered more than 60,000 households in the wealthy city-state, which currently has a population of just over three million.

The percentage of the 1.75-million-strong workforce in manufacturing declined from 29.1 percent in 1990 to 24.3 percent in 1995, reflecting the shift toward service industries, as factory labor costs rose in Singapore.

The share of workers involved in financial and business services rose to 14.6 percent in 1995 from 10.9 percent five years before.

Education attainment improved during the five-year period, with 44 percent of residents aged 25-29 attaining at least upper secondary education, more than double the 21 percent in 1990.

(AFP)

Arab Inventor Claims to Solve Diesel Pollution

LONDON — Britain's double-decker bus could be at the cutting edge of an environmental breakthrough.

For the past two years a London bus operator has carried out experiments with an Arab inventor who says he has the solution to the black diesel-based pollution fumes that led Britain's air quality levels to break world safety standards last summer.

Hassan Assali linked up with the London and Liverpool bus company Merseyside Transport Ltd (MTL) in a two-year experiment to test his invention — an oil recycler which he told Reuters cuts pollution levels by 50 percent and saves on lubricating oil by recycling it six to 10 times.

"Last summer there was big talk about stopping vehicles entering towns altogether as pollution levels were going through the roof.

"With this," said Assali cradling his recycler at his west London headquarters, "we can cut the amount of oil used and dumped, cut pollution levels, plus save money."

London buses. Professor Gordon Andrews of the Fuel and Energy Department at Leeds University and a consultant to the motor industry, also agreed it worked.

Phil Locke, systems manager for group engineering at MTL, told Reuters: "We've had a lot of success and it's given us tremendous savings. It's also given us smaller fuel emissions, which are down sharply."

For the past two years a London bus operator has carried out experiments with an Arab inventor who says he has the solution to the black diesel-based pollution fumes that led Britain's air quality levels to break world safety standards last summer.

The recycler, invented by Assali who is managing director of the company behind it called Pinmore, has taken six years to develop and millions of dollars of investment funded by an anonymous Palestinian backer.

The Pinmore recycler prototype was made by a gunsmith in London's East End because: "It was the only way we could get the precision we needed," said Assali.

Made in China

It is now being manufactured in China's Huzhan Province and has sold 6,000 units at a cost of £250 pounds ($425.2) each.

He said the bus group's initial skepticism had vanished and it is now considering buying up to 2,000 recyclers for its fleet in London and Liverpool.

"We've had so many people approach us in the past with different systems and they say it works. But most don't. We took a gamble on Mr. Assali and it's working," said Locke.

"I think it's been looked at by enough people and they see the benefits — it has the chance of turning into a big thing."

The reception from motor manufacturers like Nissan has been cooler, says Assali, despite the pressing environmental and health arguments to cut pollution.

"We will then tackle the major UK cities — Sheffield, Glasgow, Bradford. The market is massive. We could take it to Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin — every diesel city in Europe."

Customers to date include an Algerian bus company which has ordered 3,000 recyclers and Saudi Arabia's frontier guards who bought 1,000 for their trucks — "They're constantly plagued by desert sand getting into the oil," added the inventor.

In November Assali held a conference in Oxford, England attended by more than 40 delegates from the transport industry, including bus companies.

At the conference MTL publicly endorsed the recycler after two years of tests on its oldest

Assali also says two major oil companies have called him to rubbish his work out of hand. "I was afraid they would send a hitman," he joked.

But he says the evidence is in his favor. Pinmore carried out experiments for two years in north London with MTL.

Recycling Bus

The experiment fitted one bus with a recycler and one without, said Assali. "We said to the client 'Run these buses in the worst conditions possible — stopping, starting continuously and braking suddenly'."

He claimed the old red Routemaster bus, the famous London symbol also renowned for belching black fumes, was fitted with the recycler in February 1995 and did not have to change its oil until July that year.

The London arm of MTL then invited Assali to its headquarters in Liverpool where "I explained the invention to the top brass."

Commenting on the financial benefits, he says that MTL as a company uses 40 tons of oil a year — which can easily be cut by a sixth on average by using the recycler.

"We started with three principles in mind — to save oil, maintain engine quality and to help the environment by cutting polluting emissions."

The Pinmore filters the oil using a secondary filter controlled by a microprocessor.

The filter has a pyramid of disks, down which oil cascades. Disks are heated to 160 degrees, bringing oil to 120 degrees, hotter than the engine temperature. As oil trickles down the disks the contaminants, such as water, diesel fuel and gases evaporate.

The resulting vapor is fed into a chamber where it is burned off separately.

Very old vehicles like the red Routemaster buses, some of which are 25 years old, can run for 60,000 kilomeiers (37,280 miles) without changing the oil — that is six times the normal distance.

First Buses, Then the World

Pinmore has high hopes for its product and plans to take polluting vehicles by storm. "We will hit the bus companies first and then the black cab market in London — 23,000 cabs in total.

"We will then tackle the major UK cities — Sheffield, Glasgow, Bradford. The market is massive. We could take it to Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin — every diesel city in Europe."

MTL now plans to set up a mobile laboratory where anyone can inspect the recycler and the test results.

"We're working towards helping others fight pollution. We're not trying to keep it to ourselves," said Locke.

"If we put it into the bus market first, then perhaps someone from the government will say 'If it works for buses then why can't it work for taxis or the private car?'."

(Reuter)

Russian Nuclear Plants Safer, But Broke

MOSCOW -- Russia's nuclear industry was safer in 1996 than in 1995, but the industry is in desperate financial straits, ITAR-TASS said recently, citing the state nuclear- power concern Rosenergoatom.

Only two incidents were reported this year in Russia's nuclear plants, compared with four last year, the company said.

Nuclear energy output increased by six percent between 1995 and 1996, according to Rosenergoatom. The company did not say how much this represented in terms of Russia's global electricity production.

This year however has also been one of widespread discontent in the nuclear industry -- as in several other economic sectors -- over payment arrears that have left workers struggling to make ends meet.

Nuclear employees went on strike several times this year, notably at power plants in Smolensk, 400 kilometers (240 miles) west of Moscow and in Sosnovy Bor, north of the capital.

(AFP)

Pentagon Study Warns of U.S. Vulnerability to Electronic Warfare

WASHINGTON — Warning that the United States is increasingly vulnerable to electronic warfare, a Pentagon task force has called for a $3 billion program to protect vital U.S. defense information systems from attack.

The U.S. military's growing dependence on an increasingly centralized interconnected web of computers was a "recipe for a national security disaster," the Defense Science Board task force said.

"There is a need for extraordinary action to deal with the present and emerging challenges of defending against possible information warfare attacks on facilities, information, information systems and networks of the United States," the task force said in a report dated November but made public only this week.

The task force recommended a 50-point plan of action, which it estimated would cost $3 billion to implement over five years.

"There is a need for extraordinary action to deal with the present and emerging challenges of defending against possible information warfare attacks ...."

The approach calls for centralizing all Pentagon information warfare activities under a single office; establishing intelligence centers devoted to detecting and warning against electronic attacks; creating a joint office to design information infrastructure.

It also called for detailed assessments of the vulnerabilities of the information systems being used, and the creation of a backup system that could restore services for critical functions during large-scale outages.

The task force acknowledged, however, that monitoring national computer systems to guard against potential electronic assaults raises legal issues that would have to be resolved.

A variety of threats were perceived by the task force, from the garden variety computer hacker to cyber terrorists to foreign adversaries bent on espionage or disinformation or disruption of the U.S. economy.

But the report also discounted the threat of an electronic Pearl Habor.

"The very complexity and heterogeneity of today's systems provide a measure of protection against catastrophic failure, by not being susceptible to the same precise attacks.

"Presumably the more kinds of attacks required, the harder it would be to induce cascading effects that would paralyze large segments of this nation," it said.

"This is not to say that significant mischief is unlikely. It does suggest that the risk of an adversary planning and predicting the intended results at the times and places needed to truly disrupt the United States is considered low for approximately the next ten years," the report said.

(AFP)

The Grimaldi Line-Up

MONACO — The Grimaldi family, the dynasty which founded the principality of Monaco 700 years ago, is currently headed by Prince Painier III.

He was born on May 31, 1923 and succeeded to the throne after the death of his grandfather, Prince Louis II, on May 9, 1949.

Prince Rainier married Irish-American actress Grace Kelly on April 18, 1956 and they had three children, Caroline, Albert and Stephanie.

Princess Grace was killed in a car crash along the Mediterranean coast on September 14, 1982. Prince Rainier did not remarry.

Princess Caroline, the eldest of the Grimaldi children was born on January 23, 1957. She married Philippe Junot in June 1978, but they separated in 1980. The marriage was annulled by the Vatican in 1992.

In 1983 Caroline married Italian Stefano Casiraghi, but he was killed in October 1990 during an off-shore speed boat competition off Monaco.

Caroline and Stefano had three children — Andrea (born June 8, 1984), Charlotte (August 3, 1986) and Pierre (September 5, 1987).

Prince Albert, the heir to the Grimaldi throne, was born on March 14, 1958 and he remains unmarried.

If he dies single and childless, the House of Grimaldi would cease to exist as a ruling family — and tiny Monaco would revert to France.

Princess Stephanie was born February 1, 1965. She was in the car in which her mother was killed. Stephanic and her bodyguard Daniel Ducrat had two children, Louis and Pauline, before they married on July 1, 1995.

The marriage ended in divorce on October 4, 1996 after an Italian magazine published pictures of him frolicking naked with a Belgian stripper.

(AFP)

Malaysia Steers Taxi Drivers to Clean Up Act

KUALA LUMPUR — Long the scourge of the hapless commuter, taxi drivers in Kuala Lumpur are being served notice by the government and the public to clean up their act.

Accusations of taxi drivers overcharging, intimidating and bypassing local and foreign passengers have filled the pages of local newspapers in recent weeks, led by the *New Straits Times*, a pro-government daily.

Government officials, after years of spotty enforcement, have made a series of announcements on improving services, including a "courtesy and discipline" course for taxi drivers.

In addition, drivers have been told to don "clean and smart" clothes of white shirts and dark trousers while on the road.

Road Transport Department Director-General Pahamin Rajab warned that taxi drivers could lose their taxi licences in 1997 if they refuse to use their meters or take passengers.

Harsh Approach

"Enough is enough. We will consider a more harsh approach and no longer give them warnings before taking action against them," Pahamin said.

The spotlight fell on the 11,300 taxis operating in and around Kuala Lumpur just as the city's first of four light rail systems was launched in early December, in the midst of worsening traffic conditions.

The government is also scheduled to retire the inefficient services of the city's 800 pink mini-buses by January 1, 1998. The independently-run buses will be replaced by a single bus company in the hopes of raising efficiency.

Tales of taxi tyranny abound.

Australian tourist Richard Old wrote to the *New Straits Times* that he was given various quotes from cabbies when trying to get from his city hotel to nearby Chinatown.

Various Quotes

"A three ringgit ($1.20) metered fare... was variously quoted 'off-the-meter' as five ringgit during off-peak traffic, 10 ringgit during peak traffic hours and 20 ringgit if it happened to be raining," he said in a letter published in October.

Some people said they had opted to drive themselves in the city's traffic-clogged streets after nasty experiences with taxi drivers.

"I would rather be caught in a jam in the comfort of my car than be abused and cheated by people who have less brain than my pet goldfish," Brian Kumaran said in a letter to a local newspaper.

One taxi driver asked a foreign female passenger for sex instead of a fare, the *New Straits Times* reported in December.

To encourage taxis to take passengers into the city during the bumper-to-bumper peak hours, the government in mid- December raised taxi fares.

But this has also raised the ire of the public who argue that services should be first improved.

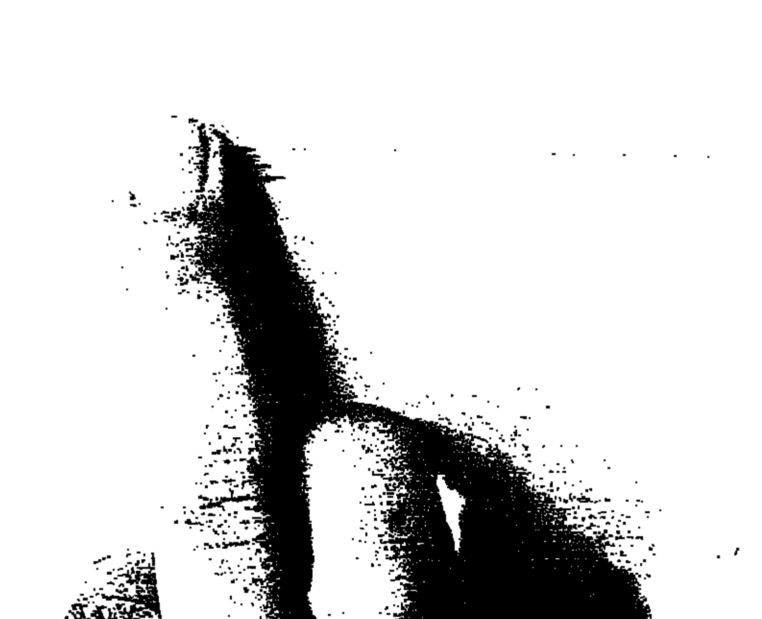
"The plan (to raise fares) can be considered successful only if taxi drivers stop overcharging and cheating, and take passengers where they want to go, regardless of the time of day," *New Straits Times* editor Abdul Kadir Jasin said in a weekly column in December.

(Reuter)

Netherlands to Put EU Information on Internet

THE HAGUE — The Dutch Foreign Ministry will use the Internet for the first half of the year to inform the public about the European Union presidency, held by the Netherlands until the end of June, the ministry announced recently.

The World Wide Web site will provide information on the EU and the Dutch presidency, including its program and agenda, as well as press communiques and other information on various ministerial meetings. *(AFP)*



Strategies for Achieving Sustained Improvement in the Quality of Life

Part 4

GNP omits a great deal of indispensable activity, without which individual and collective life could not be sustained. It fails to cover the value of unpaid work (most of it by women) in the home or community; child care, and caring for the ill, the old, and the disabled. The non-monetized economy accounts for at least as many hours of work as *all* agriculture, industry, trade, and official services taken together. Most studies value this work at between 30 and 50 percent of the GDP in industrialized and developing economies alike.

Omitting unpaid labor from the accounts has serious consequences. The crucial roles of unpaid women and of unpaid care in the welfare of nations are thereby overlooked. 'If you're invisible in the national accounts, then you're absent when public policy is made.' The 1993 version of the System of National Accounts, recommended by the UN Statistical Office, *includes* the unpaid production of goods intended for one's own consumption – such as subsistence food or do-it-yourself construction. It does not yet include, however, such self-provided services as domestic work or child care. This system also includes the depletion of 'unproduced' natural assets: forests, national fishery stocks, groundwater, and mineral reserves.

So, as a first step in the right direction, the reformed System of National Accounts should be adopted by all countries as a matter of urgency.

But more must be done, and done quickly. The Commission strongly recommends that steps be taken to measure the unpaid caring services in the home as well as voluntary work in the community, and to value them in parallel accounts to be established for each country. This could be done by using the census and sample surveys, with the results updated and widely publicized on a regular basis. Unless this is done, key policy decisions will continue to be made on the basis of erroneous information.

Such adjustments and additional information would make societies realize the cost of replacing unpaid care of the disadvantaged with professional (paid) care. While they would raise the status of women, they would provide a basis on which governments could recognize the social-security status and pension rights of unpaid care-providers. Such changes would encourage governments to support unpaid care-providers and volunteers for the work they accomplish in behalf of society and, if their burden became intolerable, the work of the car-providers would have to be done at higher expense – and of probably lower quality – by the state.

Income distribution wherein the top 20 percent of the country earns thirty-two times what the rest earns cannot continue. The task of social policy in a context of such profound inequality is Sisyphean.

If you look through the state budget of Russia, you will not find a separate item on social protection. Even at the state level ... social protection has not been singled out.

Beyond that, parallel accounts should also be established – as soon as possible – that reflect environmental costs and depreciation of natural capital. The present measure of GNP tells us nothing about whether or not the incomes it adds up are sustainable. GNP counts the depletion of irreplaceable resources or sinks as *income*. Unadjusted, GNP not only misleads; it encourages us to live unsustainably. In its current form, GNP includes the value of corrective or preventive activities that merely compensate social and environmental costs – or else it forestalls them.

When Indonesia's economic growth was adjusted for depletion of petroleum reserves, forests, and soil fertility, the value of her GDP in 1983 was lowered by 22 percent. Indonesia's economic growth rate between 1971 and 1984, 7 percent by conventional accounting, dropped to 4 percent when environmental losses were calculated. IN Costa Rica the depletion of forests, soils, and fisheries came to 9 percent of GDP in 1989, four times greater than depreciation of its conventional capital.

We thus need to reflect on the estimated future costs of damage being done to the environment today, calling upon the best economic and scientific expertise available.

Equity

The need for equity is deep-rooted in each of us. Once our sense of fairness and justice is violated, feelings of resentment may spoil the enjoyment of any level of quality of life; they may even trigger unrest. The Commission is convinced that equity is the basic principle to be respected by every individual, community, institution, and state.

Equity goes further than equality. A number of international conventions emphasize discrimination, stating (for example) that rights should be applied 'without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status'. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) affirms that states should 'ensure equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing employment and the fair distribution of income'.

Conflicts are often provoked by perceived or real gross inequalities of wealth or power between social and ethnic groups or regions, by lack of democracy or direct participation, or by the failure of leaders to pay attention to popular demands. In these cases greater participation and equity would reduce the causes of conflict. Deep down, what is at stake is the indivisibility of reality: we cannot compartmentalize reality, whether it is a reality of wealth or power. It is the inequality that exists within nations or among them, in terms of wealth, power, and so forth, that lies at the root of antagonism: inequality among *all* the actors.

Equity is not merely equal rights, or equality before the law. The Commission holds that true equity denotes real equality of opportunity, and it is possible only with an improved degree of equality in the distribution of incomes, wealth and access to services. Equity may thus, at times, require affirmative action – a certain inequality, weighted in favor of individuals or groups until now excluded, in order to redress past injustices.

Equity is not an issue to be deferred until a later stage of development. Nor is it an issue that will cease to matter once a country has grown richer. It is an essential part of policy, at every stage of its evolution. Countries dealing effectively with equity will be rewarded – as long as their policies are sound – with faster economic growth, higher human security, longer life-expectancy, and environmental sustainability. Above all, by applying equity measures countries redress thereby the quality of life for all and strengthen the cohesion of their people and of their different social groups.

Some concerned people are too obsessed with techniques of measurement, yet they are unable to measure suffering. It is this unmeasurable side of suffering that is awakening us to the realities. And what kind of society is it that remains indifferent to the abuse of a child? We need to clear both our minds and our souls.

(Courtesy Caring for the Future)

(Concluded)

The Russian Army's Latest Problem: Skinny Soldiers



MOSCOW — Thousands of Russian soldiers are badly underweight and some are even suffering malnutrition from a lack of decent food, a newspaper reported.

More than 3,000 servicemen in one division – the Interior Ministry's Special Task Division stationed near Moscow -- are considered underweight, the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* said in a report.

The Russian military has suffered a steady stream of setbacks since the Soviet breakup, including an embarrassing withdrawal from the breakaway southern Republic of Chechnya.

The military is so short of money that many servicemen receive less than half the daily calories they need, the report said, citing statistics from the military prosecutor's office.

"Soldiers in most units haven't seen fresh milk or eggs since summer and mostly subside on canned food," the newspaper added. "Even bread is becoming a luxury, as many units live on emergency rations."

The military received only half of the funds allotted for food in 1996, and the problem was further exacerbated by widespread corruption, with private suppliers providing overpriced or substandard products.

In the Far East, one private company failed to meet its contract obligations and supplied canned dog food instead, the report added.

A total of 7. 7 billion rubles ($1.4 million) worth of food supplies were stolen or embezzled last year in the Russian armed forces, adding to 21. 5 billion rubles ($3. 8 million) worth of combat gear and 4. 7 billions rubles ($840,000) worth of fuel that went missing, the report said.

Meanwhile, the number of officers who haven't received housing for their families reached 117,000 by the end of last year.

The poor conditions were blamed for an increase in suicides in the military which reached 428 last year, Moskovsky Komsomolets said.

One naval officer in the Far East, identified only as capt

(AP)

UN Chief Due in Washington in Late January



UNITED NATIONS — New UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will meet with U.S. officials in Washington for discussions on the U.S. debt to the International organization around January 25, UN sources said.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said no date had been set but indicated details were being worked out for a visit later this month.

"I think we are very close to agreeing on a date with the U.S. government and I hope we'll be able to announce it shortly," he said. "It's looking like it would be later this month."

Separately, officials said outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was expected for talks with Annan in New York this week.

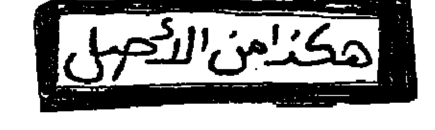
In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns did not give details of the agenda for the talks but said repaying the U.S. debt to the UN, estimated at close to $1.3 billion, is expected to be the main theme for discussions.

The State Department maintains it wants to pay the arrears, which have been held up by Congress over demands that the world body be streamlined into a smaller, less costly organization.

In an interview last week, the new UN chief said he planned to travel to Washington soon to take advantage of a "window of opportunity" with the U.S. Congress to obtain the payment of UN arrears.

Annan, a Ghanaian, says that a main priority of his five-year term will be to ensure that the United States pays $1.3 billion in arrears owed to the financially-strapped world body.

(AFP)



In Honor of Victorious Operation Karbala-ye 5 (Shalamcheh)



Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Today marks the anniversary of the epic Karbala-ye 5 Operation and the struggle and valor of the Basijis who left their imprint on the hot and sizzling plains of the South. Basijis to whose struggle the tall date palms of the south stand, even today, as a witness. These days the fellow combatants of martyrs of Karbala-ye 5 Operation gather together to keep their martyr brothers' memory alive.

Misaq Cultural Center has held and is holding various commemoration ceremonies on the memory of the loved servants of God: The commemoration ceremony of Shahid Alamolhoda and his fellow combatants (held Sunday) in Karbalay-e Howeizeh, where they departed the earth for the heavens; the glorious gathering to commemorate the martyrs who were real followers of Ashura culture, held yesterday, in the operation site of Karbala-ye 5, Shalamcheh; the ceremony of "A Night on the Wings of Memory" held Tuesday in Helal Cinema Khorramshahr, and today we gather together at pure and heavenly graves of the martyrs in Behesht-e Zahra at 2 in the afternoon, Martyrs of Karbala-ye 5 Section, beside the grave of Shahid Avini, to commemorate their courage and devotion. Let us then, gather together to wipe the dusts off their heavenly graves.

Where are the brave men who created the epic of Karbala 5 and Shalamcheh?

Where are God's true lovers, true believers whose blood was spilt on the land of Shalamcheh?

Where are the epic-makers of the battle of right and wrong, light and darkness.

How beautifully the beloved sons of this land fought back the enemy's encroachment!

How beautifully they joined their Creator and drank from the chalice of His Knowledge!

They are not dead, as far as their fellow combatants are alive, as far as their memory dwells in your and my mind, as far as there are followers of the true path Karbala 5 is reminiscent of the men who knowingly and willingly met their death.However you see it, Karbala 5 is an epic poem of suffering.

But why suffering?

The suffering now belongs to the fathers and mothers who are still awaiting the return of their sons, the parents whose wandering eyes look for a sign to tell them of their sons' fate.

Long live the memory of the youth who sank in the swamps of the South and had nothing on their lips till they died except for the *zikr* (remembrance) of Allah.

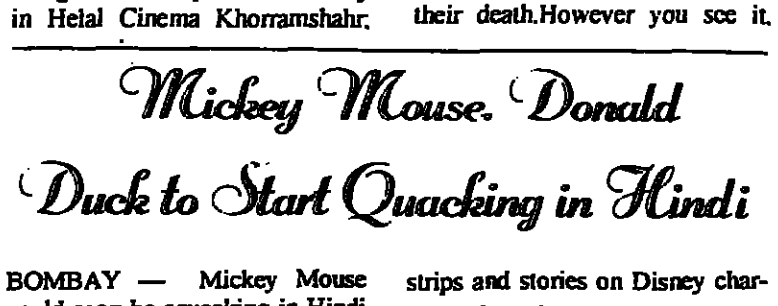
Long live the youth who taught the elderly the ways of living with honor, dying with and for honor.

Long live those soldiers of Islam, child and adult, young and old, who fought for Islam and were killed by the enemy but put behind a glorious memory of what the new generations regretfully say 'What if we were also living in their time, walk on the same land that they walked, and breath the same air that they inhaled?'

Peace of Allah and his angels be upon the youth who are buried deep in the warm soil of Shalamcheh, Peace be upon the lonely passengers on the caravan of Karbala 5.

In their death they reached the noble summit of martyrdom. The question remains, how will you and I die?

Karbala-ye 5, undertaken on January 9, 1986, was one of the most decisive operations to fight the Baathist forces who had been involved, by then, in a six-year war against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Shalamcheh, the site of the operation, is located west of Khorramshahr.



Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck to Start Quacking in Hindi

BOMBAY — Mickey Mouse could soon be squeaking in Hindi and Donald Duck quacking in Tamil, the *Economic Times* said Wednesday.

The daily reported that Denmark's Egmont International and Indian Express Publications Pvt Ltd. are forming a joint venture to publish Disney comic and activity books translated into Hindi, Tamil and other Indian languages.

The comics will feature Mickey Mouse,. Donald Duck and other well known Disney characters, the report said, but the joint venture is yet to be approved by New Delhi.

Egmont would supply comic strips and stories on Disney characters from its libraries and from new stories developed by it, the *Times* said.

The new company also plans to publish picture and coloring books, games and puzzles for preschool children.

Disney comics are read worldwide by more than two billion people in nearly 40 countries. Egmont is the largest publisher of comics and children's books in Europe.

Walt Disney cartoons are already screened in Hindi by Indian television.

(AFP)

Supplication of Kuma

So how can I endure the tribulation
of the next world and
The great ordeals that occur within it?
For it is a tribulation whose period is long;
whose station endures, and
whose sufferers are given no respite,
since it only occurs as a result of Your Wrath,
Your Vengeance and Your Anger,
And these cannot be withstood
by the heavens and the earth.
My Master, so what about me?
For I am Your weak, lowly, base,
wretched and miserable slave.
My Lord! My Lord! My Master! My Protector!
For which things would I complain to You and
for which of them would I lament and weep?
For the pain and severity of chastisement?
Or for the length and period of tribulation?
So if You subject me to the punishments with
Your enemies, gather me
With the people of Your tribulation
and separate me from Your friends and saints
then suppose, my Allah, my Master,
my Protector and my Lord,
that I am able to endure Your chastisement,
How can I endure separation from You?
And suppose that I am able to endure
the heat of Your Fire,
How can I endure not gazing
upon Your Generosity?
Or how can I dwell in the F ire
while my hope is Your pardon?

Daily Food for Thought

On Action

The all of things is an infinite conjugation of the verb to do.

THOMAS CARLYLE, The French Revolution



TOKYO, Japan (Jan. 5): A girl checks her work while other contestants show off their creations during the 33rd Calligraphy Contest in Tokyo. Several thousand school children from all over the country participated in the annual New Year event.

(AFP PHOTO)

Mitterrand Do Offers Second B at Memoirs

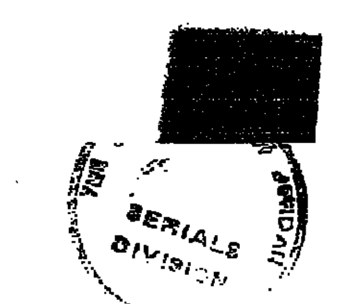
PARIS — The mysterious behind a volume of m allegedly by Francois Mitte pet dog, Baltique, is to pu new instalment to mar anniversary of the former l death, publishers said Tues

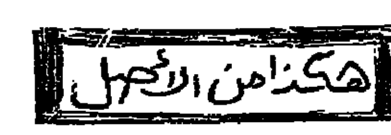
"Aboitim 2" (Barkim 2) ing to follow the succ *"Aboitim,"* published last two months after the late dent's death at the age of January 8, 1996.

The volumes' titles are a the three volumes of co tions with Mitterrand publi his former advisor Jacque and entitled *"Verbatim."* new volume, to be publis January 16, is subtitled "A *acy,*" and aims to "shed l the last years of Francois rand," according to the er's blurb.

"Thanks to *'Aboitim I,* derstood better Francois rand's secrets, passio obsessions. With *'Aboitim* cover the interests, je family and political rows the president played f Last year a Paris court l book by Mitterrand's physician for many year Gubler. The book, *"Le C cret"* (The Big Secret) v vasion of the priv Mitterrand's family, t ruled.







International Spectrum



A Glance at International Events

TEHRAN TIMES

Tehran Times Weekend Issue

THU., JAN. 9; DAY 20, 1375; SHAABAN 29, 1417

Iran Spectrum

A Glance at National Events

The World This Week

WORLD IN HIGHLIGHT

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 1

Kabul Attacked by Opposition Jets



The Afghan capital was again attacked by opposition jets, with Taleban Gunners sending a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire, lighting up the night sky.

Qatar Criticizes Bahrain

Qatar Kept up its criticism of Bahrain despite Manama's release of two Qataris convicted of spying, and demanded that its neighbor tell the truth about the affair.

Israel, France Hold Talks on Lebanon

It was revealed that Israel and France have begun secret talks on South Lebanon, including the possibility of stationing French forces there as a buffer between Israel and Lebanese Muslims.

Palestinians Stage Protests After Attack



Dozens of Palestinians staged a protest outside the hospital in Alkhalil where seven Palestinians were being treated for bullet wounds suffered in an attack by an Israeli soldier.

Canadian Law Against Helms-Burton

New legislation that takes effect Wednesday protects Canadian companies from provisions of the anti-Castro U.S. Helms-Burton Law.

Sri Lanka Troops Kill 20 Rebels

Security forces smashed a jungle base of Tamil Tiger guerrillas in eastern Sri Lanka, killing at least 20 rebels as troops kept up two offensives.

Rebels Blast Railway Bridge in Assam

Indian tribal militants, blamed for a train bombing that killed 38 people Monday, destroyed a railway bridge in another attack.

THURSDAY JANUARY 2

Turkey Attack Kurds in N. Iraq

Turkish planes attacked a Kurdish separatist base in northern Iraq as part of a massive drive by Ankara against the Kurds.

China Condemns U.S. No-Fly Zone in Iraq

China has condemned as unacceptable the no-fly zone set up by the United States and Britain over northern Iraq.

France Condemns Attack in Al-Khalil



France condemned the attack by an Israeli soldier in Al-Khalil as an act of terror, saying it showed the urgent need for an agreement on Israeli redeployment in the West Bank town.

Syria Blames Israel for Explosion



Syria accused Israel's Mossad intelligence agency of planting the bomb that ripped apart a bus in the Syrian capital Damascus, killing at least 15 people.

FRIDAY JANUARY 3

Bosnian Parliament Approves Government

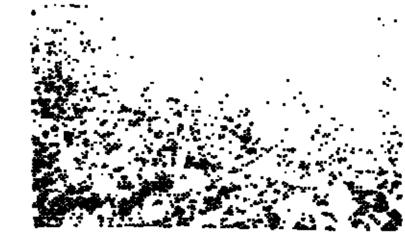
Bosnian's joint Parliament, which includes Serbs, Muslims and Croats, approved the country's new government by 37 votes for and one abstention.

Clinton to Prolong Freeze on Helms-Burton



President Bill Clinton announced his decision to prolong a freeze on a core provision of the Helms-Burton Law penalizing non-U.S. companies that do business in Cuba.

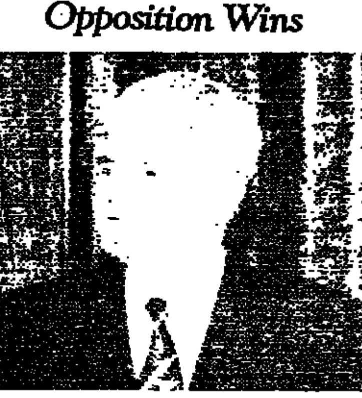
Four Killed in Kashmir Blast



Four people killed and three wounded when a powerful bomb exploded near the home of the chief minister of India's Jammu and Kashmir state.

SATURDAY JANUARY 4

Kinkel Calls Milosevic to Recognize Opposition Wins



German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel called on Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to immediately and fully recognize all wins by the opposition in local elections.

Islamic Nations Seek for Cooperation Organization

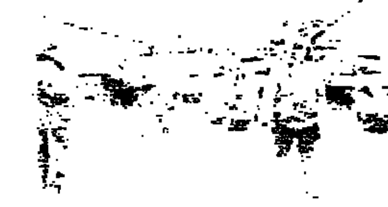
Ministers from 8 leading Islamic countries met in Istanbul Turkey to lay the foundations of a cooperatio organization which would mainly hoost their currently negligible economic ties.

Syria Blames Israel for 2nd Blast

Syria again blamed Israel for a deadly bus bombing in Damascus as a report surfaced of a possible second explosion in another Syrian city.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

Russian Troop Pullout from Chechnya Complete



Russian troops have completed their withdrawal from Chechnya, the headquarters of the Russian Interior Ministry forces told the Interfax news agency.

Bomb Explodes in South African Mosque

Three bombs exploded early Sunday, extensively damaging a mosque and two other buildings. Police arrested two white men hours after the attacks.

Three Zionist Soldiers Wounded in South Lebanon



Three Zionist soldiers were slightly wounded when their tank came under mortar fire from Hezbollah in the Israeli-occupied buffer zone in southern Lebanon, sources said.

MONDAY, JANUARY 6

Army Pledges Not to Intervene Aganist Protestors

Serbian students said they had received assurances that the army would not intervene against opposition protestors in their stand-off with Serbian authorities.

Yeltsin, Ministers Reaffirm Opposition to NATO Expansion

President Boris Yeltsin and several top ministers reaffirmed Russia's opposition to NATO's planned eastward expansion at a special Kremlin cabinet meeting, Interfax news agency said.

Sri Lanka Troops Open New Front Against Tamil Tigers

Hundreds of airborne troops launched a fresh offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas and opened a new front amid rising rebel attacks in eastern Sri Lanka, officials said.

Death Toll From Torrential Rains Rises to 66

The death toll from torrential rains that have pelted the southern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais since the start of the year was up to 66 on Monday.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

Qatar Willing to Forgive Outrage Caused by Bahrain

Qatar is willing to forgive the outrage caused by Bahrain over their territorial dispute as the two head to a Persian Gulf Arab meeting aimed at defusing tensions.

China Warns Washington Over Visa For Taiwan Vice-President

China hit out at the United States saying its decision to grant a transit visa to Taiwan Vice-President Lian Chan could have serious consequences for bilateral ties.

Clashes Erupt Between Israel, Hezbollah



Israeli troops and Hezbollah exchanged fire in southern Lebanon as a truce monitoring committee resumed a meeting to discuss complaints of cease-fire violations.

IRAN IN HIGHLIGHT

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 1

Christians Celebrate New Year



Christians all over the country celebrated the New Christian Year with Armenian Prelate, Ardak Manukian, addressing a group of worshippers in Tehran.

President Lauds Bravery of Mehran People



President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani lauded the inhabitants of Mehran for their valor and preserverance displayed during the eight years of the imposed Iraqi war.

Saturday JANUARY 4

Iran Condemns Blast in Syria

Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Mahmoud Mohammadi, linked the recent Damascus bus blast to the Zionist regime's tension-provoking policy and adventurism and condemned it.

Iran Ready to Cooperate Int'l Court

The Islamic Republic of Iran expressed readiness to cooperate with the International Court of Justice in Hague in trying and punishing war criminals.

Tehran-Dushanbe Ties Discussed

Expansion of relations between Iran and Tajikistan and formation of the two countries parliamentary friendship group were discussed in a meeting between the Iranian ambassador to Tajikistan, Rasoul Mousavian and Tajik Parliament Speaker Safar Ali Rajabev.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

60mn Saplings to Be Planted for Iran's 60mn Population

President Hashemi Rafsanjani announced that 60 million saplings will be planted in the country in token of Iran's 60 million population. Talking to reporters in Ilam Province president Rafsanjani said with the works executed or in progress in Ilam, the province has reached the index of development in most areas as compared to other provinces.

Fire Breaks Out in SAIPA Company

The storehouse of raw materials and spare parts of the SAIPA company in Tehran's vicinity was gutted by fire causing hundreds of million rials in damage.

Turkish Ambassador Confers With 1st Vice-President



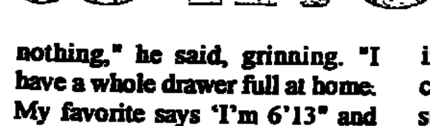
Incoming Turkish ambassador in a meeting with Iran's first vice- president, Hasan Habibi said that the political will of his country tends to expansion of all-out relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and that Ankara will exert all its efforts to give reality to this significant matter.

MONDAY, JANUARY 6

Tjikistan Peace Talks Open in Tehran

The second round of Tajikistan peace negotiations opened in Tehran aimed at reviewing the detailes of the peace preotocol signed by Tajik President Emomali Rakhmanov and the Islamic opposition leader Abdullah Nuri in Moscow on Dec. 23, 1996.

Easy Ways to Avoid an Argument



My five-year-old son Andrew and I stopped at our local ice-cream store to get dessert for his birthday party. The place was packed with people ordering complicated sundaes and milkshakes. A high-school girl was alone behind the counter. Though working as fast as she could, she seemed to be falling further and further behind.

At last she called our number, and I asked for three quarts of chocolate chip ice cream. "Three quarts!" she said, hands on hips. "Do you know how *hard* it is to scoop three quarts?"

I was tempted to let loose with "Well, excuse me! I thought this was an ice-cream store! Instead I held my tongue and asked myself a question I often raise when I'm on the brink of an argument: *why wouldn't she say something like that?* Realizing then how overwhelmed she must have felt, I asked, "Has it been one of those days?"

Her hostility melted. "It's been nonstop since this morning. I'm all alone, and I was supposed to get off at one o'clock, but..." She continued to unburden herself as she packed our ice cream. When we left, she gave us a big smile and a friendly wave.

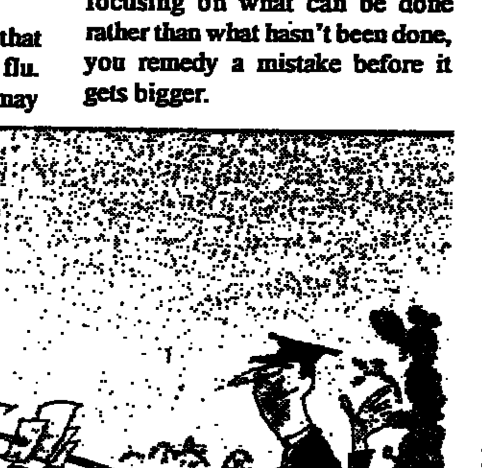
What do you do when someone says something unfair or undkind? Do you suffer in silence, not knowing what to say? Do you speak up, only to wish you hadn't?

It's natural to take offense if someone is rude. You may think, *What a jerk!* But blurting out how you feel sets an adversarial tone and will only make matters worse. Dealing with difficult people is a part of everyday life. And there are noncombative ways you can stand up for yourself without stepping on anyone's toes and starting an argument. I call these techniques "Tongue Fu!"

Handle hassles with humor. At San Francisco International Airport, I saw a tall young man walking toward me. People were pointing at him, giggling. As the towering fellow approached, I could see why. His T-shirt announced "No, I Am Not a Basketball Player." As he passed, I turned and saw the back of his shirt, which said "Are You a Jockey?"

I chased after him to ask where he got his terrific shirt. "This is nothing," he said, grinning. "I have a whole drawer full at home. My favorite says 'I'm 6'13" and the Weather Up Here Is Fine.'"

He went on to explain, "I grew almost a foot between age 16 and 18. People were always making smart-aleck remarks. My mom finally said, 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.' She was the one who thought I should wear these shirts." Smart young man, smart mom.



All of us have hot bottons that can cause us to lose our cool. If you have a condition that bothers you, try having fun with it. Start collecting comebacks for those comments you dread.

As an IRS worker explained to me, "Just about everyone who comes in here is antagonistic. Instead of taking offense, we've posted bulletin boards with comic strips that poke fun at the IRS, which we jokingly call the Income Removal Service."

One of cartoons shows an auditor telling a citizen "The secret is to stop thinking of it as *your* money." Another says "Sorry, we're IN!"

Note the IRS worker, "When taxpayers see these, their attitudes change for the better."

When people complain, don't explain.

The phone rings at work. You pick it up and the caller launches into a complaint: "I aksed for a catlogue three weeks ago and I still don't have it! What kind of business are you *running*, anyway?"

Don't bother explaining that half the staff is our with the flu. Well-intentioned though they may be, such explanations usually add to the complainer's aggravation because they come across as excuses. If the complainer has a legitimate gripe, avoid belaboring what went wrong. Instead, agree, apologize and then move on to what can be done about it. Simply say: "You're right. I'm sorry you haven't received it yet. If I can have your name and address again I'll personally put it in the mail to you today."

I recently witnessed this approach firsthand. The reception area in my doctor's office was full. The man across from me had already scanned the pile of tattered magazines and was squirming in his seat, looking at his watch every few minutes. Finally he marched to the receptionist's window and rapped on the glass. "What's going on?" he demanded angrily. "I had an appointment for three o'clock!"

"You're right," said the receptionist. "I'm sorry you've have to wait so long. The doctor was held up in surgery. Let me call the hospital to see how much longer he'll be. I appreciate your paitence."

Telling someone you're sorry doesn't mean you're admitting guilt. It simply acknowledges his frustration and defuses the complaint. Then by taking action and focusing on what can be done rather than what hasn't been done, you remedy a mistake before it gets bigger.

Exit gracefully. A man I know said he and his wife went to her parents' house for dinner one night. "While we were eating," he recalled, "I mentioned that the freeway construction was stalled again. What a mistake! My father-in-law said he was glad. That freeway never should've been built! It's devastating an important historical valley.'

"Well, I spend over an hour each way commuting to work. I told him I thought the highway was a necessary evil because there are four times as many cars as there were ten years ago, on the same number of roads. My wife's dad grumbled that it was typical of my selfish generation to think more about our commuting time than a significant archeological site.

"I lost my patience and said, 'You can't stop progress.' That did it. My father-in-law stood up and walked away, saying, 'I don't have to sit here and listen to this at my own dinner table.'

"I wish the whole thing had never happened. If I'd been more alert to how volatile this subject was for him, I could have prevented the whole unfortunate incident by saying, 'Let's agree to disagree about this,' and politely steering the conversation to something else."

In almost every controversy each side has legitimate points, so agreeing to disagree is one of several graceful exits from a no-win discussion. If it's obvious that you won't change the other person's mind and he or she won't change yours. stop. Before you do irreparable harm, remember the Russian proverb: "A spoken word flies; you won't catch it."

One effective way to sidestep stalemates is to say, "We're both right!" and move on to a safer topic. For example, you and your mate disagree about how to discipline your teenager, and your dicussion is escalating into an argument. Just because you aren't seeing eye to eye doesn't mean you're enemies. Saying "Hey, we both want the same thing" can get you out of the adversarial mode and get you working together again.

Or you can gracefully bow out before you even bow in. I was talking with several colleagues, and the conversation turned to the governor's race. The campaign had become ugly, with each party charging the other with dirty deeds. My companions were on opposite side of the political fence, and their discussion became heated. One turned to me and asked, "Who do you think should be elected governor?" I wasn't about to get involved in their no-win debate. I put my hands up and said with a smile, "Leave me out of this one."

No matter what the situation, arguments are a waste or at best, a misuse of time. By avoiding fruitless arguments, everybody wins.

(Courtesy the Reader's Digest)



Glazed Fruit Bread

You will need...	12 oz. self-raising flour
	½ level teasppoon salt
	2 oz. castor sugar
	2 oz. walnuts, chopped
	2 oz. dates, stoned and chopped
Preparation time 10 minutes	2 rounded tablespoons malt exract
	2 oz. butter
	¼ pint milk
Cooking time 1 hour	2 eggs, beaten
	For the glaze and topping:
	3 tablespoons apricot jam
Oven setting 335°F; gas mark 3	2 oz. icing sugar
	1 oz. walnuts
	4 dates, stoned and halved
	glacé cherries and apricots

Well grease a 2-lb loaf tin. Sift flour and salt into a bowl, add sugar,walnuts and dates. Gently heat malt and butter until butter has melted. Pour into center of flour mixture with blended milk and eggs. Mix to smooth, soft dough.

Turn dough into tin. Bake in a very moderate oven for about 1 hour.

To make glaze, heat jam slowly with a little water and spread over top of loaf. Place glacé or dried apricots down the center with a cherry in middle of each. Arrange walnuts and dates along either side. Mix incing sugar with 1 tablespoon water and trickle icing over top to give a criss-cross effect.

QUICK TIP

For a quicker finish, brush the top of the loaf with warmed honey or golden syrup and scatter with chopped walnuts.





Old and Forgetful

As children, we were amazed that grandma remembered every detail of something which happened 50 years ago, but could not recall where she put her glasses five minutes ago. But that is the way memory ages. Now scientists have found out exactly which parts of our memory we can expect to lose later in life.

Word memory (your vocabulary), implicit memory (how to drive or swim, for example) and remote memory (the kind that allows you to answer general knowledge questions) remain quite unaffected. Then why do old people seem absent-minded? That is because working memory and episodic memory grow weaker.

Working memory is the kind which lets you do several things simultaneously without confusion. The kind which allows a 25-year-old to write a note, carry on a conversation, and keep an eye on something cooking, all at the same time. This ability comes down between 40 and 50, which is why we naturally move towards more focused jobs and lifestyles. A faded working memory is what makes an 80-year-old forget what she began talking about!



You can also expect to lose episodic memory experience, like whether you took that pill or not. This is because our ability to lay down new memories weakens, so when the mind tries to recall, it draws a blank.

Keeping the mind stimulated and challenged can slow this downslide, say researchers. The natural death of brain cells cannot be stopped and by 70, about 20 percent of the cells are out of action. But frequent reasoning and recalling can strengthen connections between remaining brain cells. These strong connections are the "hardware" that make for a dependable memory even in later years.

(Courtesy the Sunday Review)

WORD PROBE

WHERE TO KEEP THEM

You can keep things in all the words hidden in this puzzle list. There is a CELLAR, a GARDEN SHED and a YARD. There is food in the LARDER and money in the SAFE.

A——— A——— A——— A——— B—— B—— B——— B——— C———

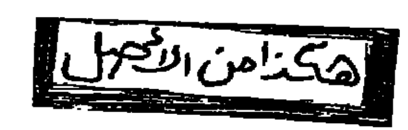
C——— D——— D——— G——— S——— G——— H——— L——— L———

L——— L——— R——— M——— M——— R——— R——— S——— S———

S——— S——— T——— T——— V—— W——— W——— W——— Y———

Z	K	Y	J	C	L	H	Z	R	B	C	S	W	C	G	C	Y	Y	L	Z
L	O	R	Q	A	R	T	O	A	A	T	T	E	X	E	L	L	E	N	B
C	Y	O	L	H	F	L	R	L	O	S	Z	H	Y	F	L	Z	H	A	T
I	R	T	S	O	C	N	U	C	D	R	L	C	B	A	Q	L	S	Y	B
T	A	I	L	I	Y	Y	K	N	E	E	F	A	D	A	T	E	A	W	N
T	R	S	H	P	L	R	Z	D	B	Q	R	C	T	Z	M	T	T	R	N
A	B	O	X	N	O	O	R	R	E	B	M	U	L	E	E	R	P	Q	M
S	I	T	F	O	H	A	G	A	K	U	R	Q	N	Y	S	E	S	J	O
G	L	E	H	R	L	O	R	T	M	J	W	T	R	O	U	A	Y	H	T
I	A	D	H	Z	I	S	E	Y	S	D	O	O	J	A	O	S	R	M	B
A	H	R	Y	A	E	O	S	S	X	A	T	Q	W	Z	H	U	A	U	T
Z	K	A	D	N	G	E	Y	B	U	I	F	F	Q	Y	E	R	N	S	B
K	R	U	A	E	Y	A	O	R	S	O	R	E	R	D	R	Y	A	E	C
D	Q	L	K	I	N	X	Z	O	E	A	H	U	F	B	O	I	R	U	D
N	T	Z	H	M	R	S	P	I	H	S	O	E	I	A	T	Z	G	H	E
F	N	C	A	O	H	E	H	W	H	N	E	K	R	A	S	R	P	G	P
J	R	B	O	U	R	X	I	E	R	E	W	R	N	A	K	N	A	B	O
A	K	M	Y	J	U	U	S	A	O	W	D	K	W	G	W	S	G	T	T

(Solution Next Thursday)



Feature

Facets of Countries

Spotlight: Iceland

The Happiest People on Earth



A farm family near Skalholt in southern Iceland.

In a poll of 18 nations, The Gallup Organization discovered that Icelanders are the happiest people alive. All 267,809 of them. Eighty-two percent are satisfied with their personal lives. The United States ranked fifth at 72 percent; Japan came in seventh with 42 percent.

Some people would say that happy Iceland is a statiscial fluke. This is a country so small, an ordinary citizen can make an appointment to see the president.

True, Iceland is no utopia. Icelanders are big boozers, with a fishing tradition of binge drinking. Almost a third of the births are out of wedlock. But that's what makes the Gallup study so interesting. Icelanders have problems like the rest of us, yet they are happy with their lot. So what gives?

Consider Thorir Hlynur Thorisson, 28. For his vacation, he spent a month working 16-hour days, seven days a week, as a fishing guide. It was "heaven on earth," he says. Then after a single night off, he was back at his regular job—on a fishing boat, working six hours on, six hours off, around the clock.

We would call Hlynur a workaholic; but so are most of his compatriots. It pays off. With a per capita gross domestic product of $19,905 (the U.S. figure is $27,541), Icelanders are among the wealthiest people on earth. Their tax dollars buy them excellent education and medical care. Iceland has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world, and almost the highest longevity.

The dour Swill have a well-run state and all their material needs met, too, yet no one could accuse them of a cheerful outlook. Sociologist Thorolfur Thorlindsson of the University of Iceland believes the secret lies not in his country's comforts, but in its age-old discomforts. They have taught Icelanders to enjoy what they have.

Isolated in the cold North Atlantic, buffeted by a hostile sea, condemned to 20 hours of darkness each day in winter, the people have for centuries lived on the vagaries of the fish catch. "Our culture is colored by the harshness of nature," says Thorlindsson. "That's why Icelanders have a tolerant attitude to the problems of life. They don't expect the same sort of stability often expected in other nations."

And so it seems. Americans are considerably better off by material standards than ever before. Yet they seem less happy, less contented with their lot.

Like Icelanders, Americans are individualists. Where they seem to differ is in their sense of community. Iceland, known as the land of "fire and ice," is about living with opposing forces. It is one of the most active volcanic countries on earth, but has 4536 square miles of glacier—heat and cold, coexisting. No surprise then that its society can reconcile another set of opposing forces: individualism and the needs of the community.

Anyone who thinks Americans invented rugged individualism has only to visit Iceland. This nation has an ancient respect for independence. Way bacj ub tge tebtg century, Iceland was a commonwealth; today Icelanders still place high value on their freedom.

But here's the paradox: this individualism exists with a sense of community. For years I have known an Icelandic family that embraces a family drunk and an illegitimate child. This family never let them drift, like human flotsam, to be beached at some government insitution. "Icelanders have strong systems of support," says Thorlindsson.

Tolerance is not a hollow phrase in Iceland. The word for "stupid" is *heimskur*, which roughly means "comes from home"—or as we would say, provincial or narrow-minded. Icelanders believe only a dolt is unable to see the other fellow's position. In this sense, they might find some of what passes for political debate in the United States absolutely *heimskur*.

Mos Icelanders travel out into the world as young adults. They learn that theirs is not the only way of doing things. Yet this doesn't translate into contempt for their own land and its history.

The 12th century Icelandic sagas, studied at universities the world over, are revered at home. Turn on the radio and at the top of the charts is Bubbi Morthens, a troubadour.

Last summer in the lava fields of Iceland's interior, accountant Sigmar Bjornsson pointed out to me a cave where thieves had hidden. He showed me where they stored their weapons, where the villages attacked, told me how one of the thieves, who had only one leg, walked on his hands to the glacier on the horizon.

"When did they hole up here?" I asked.

"About 900 years ago" was the answer. Nearly a millennium, and the myth is still alive.

How many Americans have that kind of familiarity with their nation's past, its myths, its history? How many even care?

I wish America's multiculturalists and historical revisionists would grasp what Icelanders understand: trashing your nation's myths is the wrong way to create a better society. "A nation has to be tolerant of newcomers," says psychiatrist Niel Micklem. "But if it loses its myths, it loses its center."

Maybe I'm wrong. But I suspect that this loss of "center" is what makes so many Westerners unhappy amid their affluence.

(Courtesy of Reader's Digest, Sept. 1996.)

Travelogue

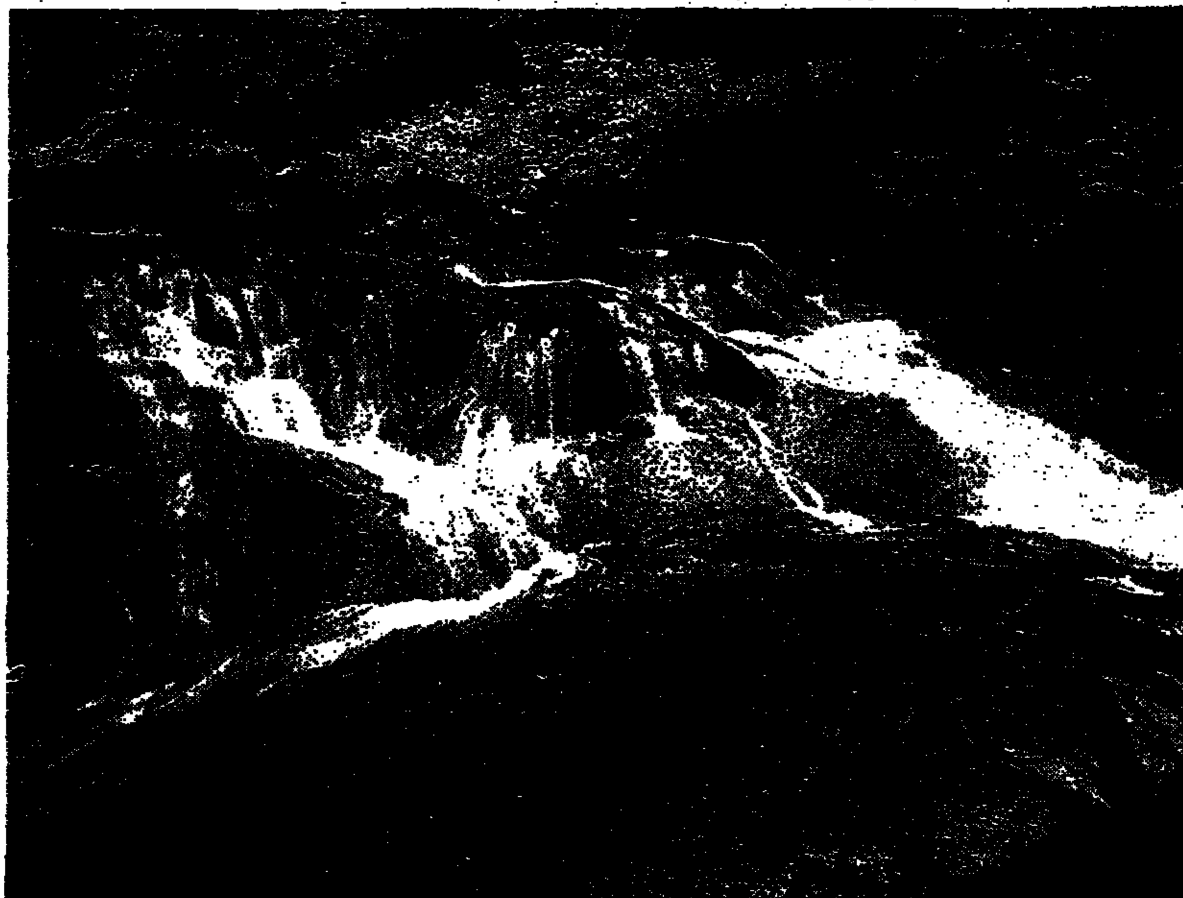
The Bracken: Germany's Mountain of Unity

It is not easy to determine definitively whence the Brocken drew its particular symbolic strength. Over the centuries, countless sagas had been woven around northern Germany's highest mountain, but that in itself would certainly not have been sufficient to turn the Brocken into the Germans' mountain of longing. That required the additional help of Germany's greatest poet, Goethe that is, not Heine. With great passion, and totally in the mode of the "Sturm und Drang" movement, Goethe had longed to set foot one day on the "holy peak" of the Brocken. Finally, on December 10, 1777, a radiant winter's day, he partook of this great joy. Decades later the Brocken was to be poetically enshrined in the highest grandeur ever accorded a German mountain: Goethe integrated it into his "Faust" in the shape of the "Blocksberg."

Starting from Ilsenburg you can make the most stunning, if also the steepest, ascent to the Brocken. The path leads along the charming bank of the Ilse through the sparse, light-filled beech and oak forests of the lower Harz district. Those for whom the ascent on foot is too strenuous would do best to travel from Ilsenburg to Schierke where instead they can climb into the "Brockenbahn." A "good old" steam engine carries the genuinely, and not so genuinely, foot-sore to the summit in half an hour. And the sight of the chuffing, puffing, whistling monster is enough to cause anyone, not just children, to gape in awe.

The Brocken train service was discontinued with the erection of the "Iron Curtain." The summit of the Brocken was declared a "restricted military area" and blocked off by a concerete wall three meters high. In the jargon of the GDR authorities it was called the "highest point in the socialist defensive wall." The Brocken, a fateful German mountain. At that moment it regained its old symbolic potential—dating from the time of the wars of liberation—as the mountain of the much-longed for German unification. On Sunday, December 3, 1989 the gate in the Brocken's defensive wall was finally opened for the waiting hikers who had been demanding free access to the Brocken with the aid of banners and chanting. "A free Brocken for free citizens!". Since then, thousands of people visit the Brocken every day, on foot, by mountain bike, in horse-drawn carriages, or on the Brocken train. Some days there are up to 15,000 people on the summit. Then it is difficult to discern anything of the one-time secrets of the Brocken, to say nothing of the "sublime spectacle that moves the soul to prayer." What then holds sway between the grilled sausage stands and the toilets is not pious stupefaction but hustle and bustle. Literally, all hell is let loose, and that by its very nature has its drawbacks. Mass tourism at the heart of a national park is anachronistic.

And yet even the kind of general commotion that sometimes reigns on this cult mountain has a tradition. It is part and parcel of the essence of the Brocken that it gives rise to contradictory impressions. The mountain, according to Heine, has something "Germanically peaceful, understanding, tolerant," and at the same time crazy, confusing and chaotic about it. It inspires far-sightedness and inner contemplation, and sometimes too it befuddles the spirit. There have been wild fun and laughter on the Brocken for hundreds of years. Hein, summarizes this tersely: "The Brocken is German."



The steep path to the Brocken along the Ilse.

The Mail

Sir,

We are Amnesty International members and we know there has already been a lot of media interest in the question of human rights abuses perpetrated against women, children and citizens in Afghanistan following the Taleban takeover of Kabul.

You do not ignore the importance of international pressure. That is the reason why we ask you to issue a clear statement to the Afghan government that the world's governments in general and human rights associations in particular should not ignore abuses of human rights. We take no position on the matter of political recognition of the government itself but we ask Kabul officials to preserve the fundamental rights of women embodied in the recommendation of the Beijing UN World Conference on Women.

These are denied their most fundamental rights following the imposition of strict Islamic law by the Taleban forces: obligation to stay indoors, to be veiled, some displaced and forced to leave their jobs, etc...We believe that women physically restricted under Taleban codes only by reason of their gender may be considered prisoners of conscience.

We thank you for the action you may exert on the Afghan officials.

Sincerely yours,

Y. Stille, et. al.
Couvin, Belgium

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my extreme disquiet concerning human rights abuses against women in Afghanistan being perpetrated at present.

The Taleban have imposed strict Islamic law on women and are thereby denying these women some of their most fundamental rights, including the right of association, freedom of expression, and employment.

I urge you through your esteemed newspaper to exert your influence on the Taleban, or any new government in Afghanistan of which the Taleban may be a major part, to obtain guarantees that human rights, inclulding the fundamental rights of women, will be respected.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) Nicola Greenwood
Loughborough, England

TODAY IN HISTORY

1962 - Soviet Union and Cuba sign trade pact.
1965 - It is estimated that more than 500 people suspected of being rebels have been executed by Congo government forces in Stanleyville in six weeks since city was retaken.
1968 - U.S. surveyer 7 spacecraft makes soft landing on moon, ending U.S. series of unmanned explorations of lunar surface.
1970 - Paris officials say France has agreed to sell Mirage military jets to revolutionary regime in Libya.
1973 - White-ruled country of Rhodesia closes its borders with Zambia to try to cut off black liberation forces.
1977 - Palestinian nationalist suspected of having planned attacks on Israeli athletes at 1972 Olympic games in Munich is arrested in Paris by French Intelligence Agents who identify him as Abou Daoud.
1978 - Islamic Revolution erupts in Iran.
1989 - Mujahedeen break off talks on ending Afghan war with Soviets.
1990 - Former Romanian interior minister says deposed President Nicolae Ceausescu ordered troops to fire on demonstrators and his wife ordered troops who did not want to shoot a pregnant woman to run her down with a tank instead.
1991 - U.S. Secretary of State Baker and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz meet for six hours in Geneva, but make no progress toward resolving Persian Gulf crisis.
1992 - Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaim their own state, raising fears of bloodshed in the multiethnic republic.
1993 - In a symbolic victory, government troops capture the headquarters of UNITA rebel leader Jonas Savimbi in central Angola. Savimbi, however, escaped.
1994 - Australia awoke to light rain, but not enough to extinguish 135 summer forest fires which have raged across the southeast for more than a week.
1995 - Russian forces close in on the Chechen presidential palace.
1996 - Chechen rebels demanding an end to the war in their breakaway republic seize a hospital and at least 2,000 hostages in Kizlyar, Dagestan, and battle Russian troops in the town's streets. At least 40 people die.




Photo: Mojtaba Takin

TOMORROW IN HISTORY

1815 - British declare was against king of Kandy in Ceylon.

1889 - France establishes protectorate over Ivory Coast.

1990 - Frederick Roberts lands in South Africa as commander-in-chief of British Army.

1906 - Britain and France open military and naval talks.

1919 - British Army takes over administration of Baghdad way.

1920 - League of Nations comes into being.

1923 - Meml. Lithuania, under allied occupation, is seized by Lithuania.

1928 - Leon Trotsky, one of chief rail-protects of Soviet Union, is ordered into exile by Soviet government.

1938 - Japanese troops enter Tsingtao, China.

1947 - Japanese invade Dutch East Indies in World War II.

1955 - Federal Council of Nigeria meets for first time.

1959 - Soviet Union proposes conference to draft German Peace Treaty.

1962 - Ceylon's prime minister arrives in Peking on mission of conciliation.

1969 - Sweden becomes first western European country to announce it will establish full diplomatic relations with North Vietnam

1977 - Two Soviet cosmonauts rocket into space to join crew of orbiting Salyut research station.

1989 - Astronomers discover 90-trillion mile long stream of gas that appears to be feeding black hole at center of earth's Milky Way galaxy.

Short Story

Every family had its own...

Secret Language of Love

By: Terry Miller Shannon

I guess people would be puzzled if they read one of the letters my brother writes to me. At the end there is often a cryptic message: "P.S. E-e." Although my brother writes wonderful letters, that part is my favorite.

From my earliest memory "E-e" was a family code. Roughly translated from heart-speak into English, it means: "I love you too much to tell you in words.: I'm not sure how or when it all started, but I suspect the roots lie in the squeal made by a small child being hugged breathless.

"E-e" was sometimes easier to say than "I love you." Its nonsense syllables let the listener focus on other signs of love: eye contact, a meaningful smile, a certain tone of voice.



And, of course, it was a secret signal among family members. That made it all the more special.

When, at age nine, I finally mastered the art of riding a two-wheeler, I was rewarded with a proud "E-e" from Dad. And several years later when a date stood me up, Mom soothed me with the same two syllables, softly spoken.

But usually the phrase was given for no reason, no occasion, no special event.

There was no way to earn it. It seemed to flow unexpectedly from the giver's heart. A true gift. And although no reply was expected, it was often an "E-e" in a pleased tone, which meant: "Thank you so much! I feel the same way about you."

When we became teenagers, we kids quit saying "E-e" to each other. It definitely wasn't cool. And then, in what seemed about 15 minutes late, we were grown. We were adults. We were gone.

At a reunion one year my brother gave me a hug. "How are you?" he asked. How was I? I was heart-sore, sorrowing. Disappointed in myself and in life. Feeling hopeless. But should I tell him? Why ruin the mood?

I looked at him. He looked at me. Then he did something remarkable.

"E-e" he said, his voice velvet with tenderness.

My heart lifted. I could feel it floating in my chest like a helium-filled party balloon. I felt reconnected, deep down where it counts. With family. With love.

Whatever was wrong could be made right. Life would go on and get better. I was suddenly certain of it. And it did.

Years passed. I met someone who seemed to be the man of my dreams and took him home to meet the folks. When the time came for goodbyes, Mom hugged me close.

"E-e!" she said to me tenderly.

"E-e!" I replied in the same tone.

In the car this man quirked an eyebrow at me. "What were you and your mom saying to each other? What language was that?"

"A secret language," I said. Then I explained.

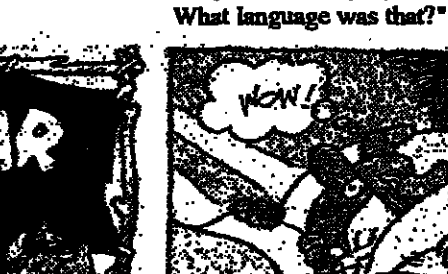
No one could have grasped the concept faster. At the most appropriate times he would croon, "Eeee-ee-ee-eeee!" One day, he sent me an entire letter consisting of uppercase and lowercase e's.

Master decoder the I am, I got the message and married the man.

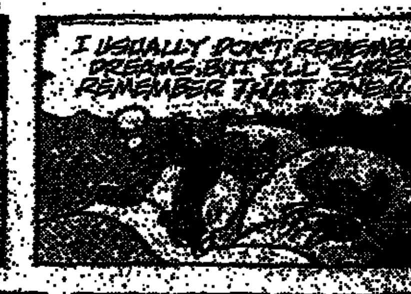
Who could resist?

GRAFFITI

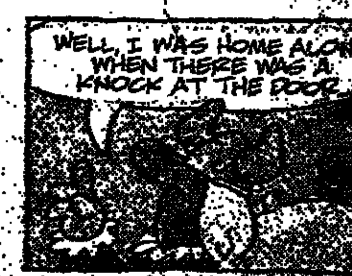
DO SOCKS IN THE DRYER DISAPPEAR INTO THE HOZONE LAYER?





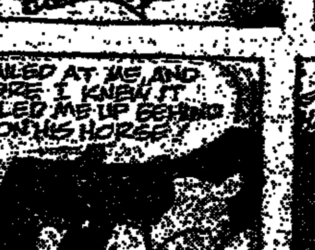
















Happy New Year, 1997